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Gertrude Himmelfarb

The British Underclass: Ten Years Later *Charles Murray*

What about the Overclass? *Melanie Phillips*

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BOOKS IN REVIEW: *Adam Wolfson* on cost-benefit analysis *Kay S. Hymowitz* on childrearing · *Mark Blitz* on Heidegger *Daniel J. Mahoney* on the Two Cities · *Alvin Kernan* on evolution

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The idea of compassion: The British vs. the French Enlightenment

GERTRUDE HIMMELFARB

THE "politics of compassion" has become a term of derision. Applied by conservatives to liberals, it suggests a soft-hearted and, worse, soft-minded approach to social problems, in which sentiment prevails over reason, intentions over results, and "feeling good" over "doing good." There is some justice in that criticism, but also some evasion of the real issue. For if the politics of compassion in its familiar sense is faulty, compassion itself, as a principle of social relationships and behavior, is not. Indeed, it is the basis of a serious social ethic with an honorable lineage. Going back at least to ancient Judaism and Christianity, it has come down to us in that hybrid form known as the Judeo-Christian tradition. In modernity, the religious virtue of compassion has been transmuted into a secular one, and a private duty has become a public responsibility. This was the unique achievement of

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the British Enlightenment—the British, not the French.

The British did not have *philosophes*; they had "moral philosophers." Adam Smith was the "Professor of Moral Philosophy" at the University of Glasgow, as Francis Hutcheson had been before him and Thomas Reid after him. The term applies as well to others who had no such academic title but were engaged in the same philosophical enterprise—the third Earl of Shaftesbury, most notably, who had the distinction of being the father of the British Enlightenment. Shaftesbury's collection of essays, including a much quoted and praised essay on virtue, appeared in 1711 and went through 10 more editions by the end of the century. It was he who gave currency to the terms that became the key concepts in British philosophical and moral discourse for the whole of the century—"social virtues," "social affections," "natural affections," "moral sense," "moral sentiments," "fellow-feeling," "benevolence," "sympathy," "compassion."

The year after Shaftesbury's death, Bernard Mandeville paid unwitting tribute to him by launching the most serious and systematic attack on his philosophy. *The Fable of the Bees* was published in 1714; its subtitle, "Private Vices, Public Benefits," reads like a manifesto contra-Shaftesbury. Society, Mandeville argued, was based neither on the "friendly qualities and kind affections" of man's nature nor on his faculties of "reason and self-denial," but rather on "what we call evil in this world, moral as well as natural." Evil is "the grand principle that makes us sociable creatures, the solid basis, the life and support of all trades and employments without exception." With a fine display of impartiality, Mandeville applied this jaundiced view of human nature to rich and poor alike. But it was to the poor that it had particular pertinence, for it was they who show "such an extraordinary proclivity to idleness and pleasure" and would never work "unless they were obliged to it by immediate necessity."

In the second edition of the *Fable,* published nine years later, Mandeville added a critique of the charity schools that were then so numerous—schools for pauper children and orphans, who were fed and clothed, taught to read (and sometimes write), and then sent out to serve as apprentices or servants. (There were 1,500 such schools at the time with an

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enrollment of 28,000.) Mandeville identified the main culprit responsible for those schools as that "noble writer," Lord Shaftesbury, who "fancies that as man is made for society, so he ought to be born with a kind of affection to the whole of which he is a part, and a propensity to seek the welfare of it." The schools, Mandeville protested, encouraged children in their penchant for sloth and vice and incapacitated them for a life of poverty and hard work.

The *Fable of the Bees* profoundly shocked contemporaries, provoking a frenzy of attacks culminating in a ruling handed down by the grand jury of Middlesex condemning it as a "public nuisance." Joining in the near universal condemnation of Mandeville were most of the eighteenth-century greats—Bishop Berkeley, Francis Hutcheson, Edward Gibbon, Adam Smith. It was Smith who condemned Mandeville's philosophy as "licentious" and "wholly pernicious."

A natural virtue

Mandeville's was a spirited but futile attempt to abort the moral philosophy that was to be a distinctive feature of the British Enlightenment, a philosophy in which compassion, not self-interest or even reason, played the larger part. Unlike Locke, who proclaimed that there are "no innate practical principles" of morality, justice, or faith, the moral philosophers of the eighteenth century insisted upon just such principles. Thus where Locke looked to education to inculcate in children the sentiment of "humanity" or "compassion," Shaftesbury rooted that sentiment in nature and instinct rather than education or reason. "To compassionate," he wrote, "i.e., to join with in passion ... To commiserate, i.e., to join with in misery ... This in one order of life is right and good; nothing more harmonious; and to be without this, or not to feel this, is unnatural, horrid, immane [monstrous]."

The other moral philosophers qualified Shaftesbury's teachings in one respect or another, but they agreed that the "social virtues" derived from a sense or sentiment that was innate in human nature. They did not deny reason; they were by no means irrationalists. But they gave reason a secondary, instrumental role. Francis Hutcheson, who first enunciated the principle, "The greatest happiness for the greatest numbers," rooted

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it in a "moral sense" that is "antecedent to instruction" because it is universal in all men. Bishop Butler delivered two sermons entitled "Compassion" in which he claimed that reason alone is not "a sufficient motive of virtue in such a creature as man"; it had to be joined with compassion, which is "a call, a demand of nature, to relieve the unhappy, as hunger is a natural call for food"—the "unhappy," he added, including the "indigent and distressed." Thomas Reid argued that if man had been endowed only with reason, the race would soon have been extinct; fortunately, reason is complemented by the "benevolent affections," which are "no less necessary for the preservation of the human species than the appetites of hunger and thirst." So too Adam Ferguson made "fellow-feeling" or "humanity" so much an "appurtenance of human nature" as to be a "characteristic of the species."

Even Hume, who had a notably unsentimental view of human nature, believed in an instinct that derived not from reason but from "a moral taste," or "benevolence." "It appears that a tendency to public good, and to the promoting of peace, harmony, and order in society does, always, by affecting the benevolent principles of our frame, engage us on the side of the social virtues." And again, more eloquently: "There is some benevolence, however small, infused into our bosom; some spark of friendship for human kind; some particle of the dove kneaded into our frame, along with the elements of the wolf and serpent."

If reason, for these moral philosophers, was not a sufficient explanation for the social virtues, neither was self-interest or self-love. Unlike Hobbes and Locke, who predicated their moral philosophy upon self-love buttressed by reason, they insisted that "fellow-feeling" was disinterested, derived from a feeling for the other rather than for oneself. Hutcheson said that it could not be a product of self-interest because it involves associating oneself with such painful experiences as the suffering and distress of others. Hume, protesting against what he called the "selfish system of morals" of Hobbes and Locke, declared that "disinterested benevolence, distinct from self-love," is an essential quality of human nature.

Adam Smith made the idea of compassion the central principle of his *Theory of Moral Sentiments*. The opening sen-

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tences set the tone and theme of that work.

> How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature which interest him in the fortune of others and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others when we either see it or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner.... By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, ... we enter, as it were, into his body and become in some measure the same person with him.

"The perfectly virtuous man," Smith went on, "desires not only to be loved, but to be lovely ..., not only praise, but praiseworthiness.... To feel much for others and little for ourselves, ... to restrain our selfish and to indulge our benevolent affections, constitutes the perfection of human nature." Sympathy cannot be regarded as a selfish principle, for it comes not by imagining oneself in another's piteous condition, but imagining the other in it. Thus "a man may sympathize with a woman in childbed, though it is impossible that he should conceive himself as suffering her pains in his own proper person and character."

A social religion

When historians write about the British Enlightenment, it is these moral philosophers they have in mind. Thus they either ignore one of the most momentous events of the time, the religious revival started in 1738 by John and Charles Wesley, or they consign it to the status of an anti-Enlightenment. Like the eminent Victorian (and agnostic) Leslie Stephen, they tend to regard it as "heat without light, ... a recrudescence of obsolete ideas." Yet there is good reason to bring the revival into the Enlightenment—not the Enlightenment of the French *philosophes*, to be sure, but that of the British moral philosophers.[1]

Whatever the philosophical, theological, and temperamental differences between the moral philosophers and Methodists (the term was current at the time), in important practical and

[1] By the same token and at about the same time, Methodism entered the American Enlightenment. The Great Awakening in America coincided almost

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ethical matters they tended to converge. If there was a "rationalizing" of religion by the deists, there was also a "socializing" of religion by the Methodists. While the moral philosophers were invoking an innate moral sense as the basis for benevolence, Methodist preachers were inculcating a religious gospel of good works. "The poor are the Christians," John Wesley proclaimed, and proceeded to make of them his special mission. His poor, moreover, were not only the "deserving," "respectable" poor who were the likeliest candidates for conversion. He made a point of seeking out "the outcasts of men," the "forlorn ones," the "most flagrant, hardened, desperate sinner." No one was beyond salvation, no one too poor, benighted, or uncivilized to attain the spiritual and moral level deserving of the name Christian.

The poor were not only the objects of spiritual redemption; they were the beneficiaries of Wesley's social ministrations. Christianity, he declared, is "essentially a social religion." One of his best known and often repeated sermons was on the theme, "Gain all you can, ... save all you can, ... give all you can." The Methodists distributed food, clothing, and money to the needy, paid "visitations" to the sick and to prisoners in jail, set up loan funds and work projects for the unemployed, founded hospitals, orphanages, friendly societies, schools, libraries, and other philanthropic enterprises, and took a prominent part in the movements for prison reform and the abolition of the slave trade. Wesley himself was especially passionate on the subject of "that execrable villainy," slavery. "An African," he wrote, was "in no respect inferior to the European"; if he seemed so, it was because the European had kept him in a condition of inferiority, depriving him of "all opportunities of improving either in knowledge or virtue."

Perhaps most notable were the efforts of the Methodists to educate the lower classes—an education largely devoted to a

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exactly with the Wesleyan revival in England, and was inspired in part by Wesley's associate, George Whitefield. The historian Martin Marty describes two intertwined revolutions: a spiritual one that made American religion evangelical, and a political one that made American society republican. In the idea of America as a "city upon a hill," he observes, "pious and Enlightenment ideas could meet, so the two schools of thought could employ one kind of futuristic imagery while seeking separate goals: a Christian America or a republican America. Both were part of a common pursuit of happiness."

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reading of the Bible and religious tracts but that often went well beyond that, as is evident from their publications: a cheap dictionary, a nine-page English grammar, a host of tracts (many written by Wesley himself) on medicine, electricity, natural history, and the like, and abridgements (somewhat bowdlerized, to be sure) of Shakespeare, Milton, Spenser, Locke, and other classics.

In the Methodist communion, the poor had the satisfaction of being members in good standing. There were few social distinctions among them, the lay preachers having no special educational, social, or even sexual qualifications; women preachers had the same status as men. The congregants met once a week in small groups known as "classes," and in larger groups called "families." The historian Bernard Semmel has described this communal aspect of Methodism as the equivalent of the French ideal of fraternity. "In the century of Voltaire's *sauve qui peut* and Smith's *laissez-faire*, when the paternalism of the traditional hierarchical society was breaking down, Methodism sought to endow the lower classes with a sense of their own worth, and to revive traditional religion as a source of warmth and solace, of comfort and joy."

This ethic was all the more effective because it was not only a social ethic but also an individualistic one. Derived from a powerful belief in the individual's relation to God, it promoted a sense of personal moral responsibility akin to the Puritan ethic, encouraging the virtues of thrift, diligence, temperance, honesty, and hard work. "Self-help" was a natural correlative to the helping of others. The ethic had the additional distinction of crossing both class and religious lines. By the end of the century, Wesleyanism had spawned an Evangelicalism within the Church of England that appealed largely to the middle and upper classes, while the Methodist sects that left the Church attracted the working and lower-middle classes.

The new political economy

Moral philosophy and religious gospel acquired a powerful ally in the new political economy. Adam Smith, who combined the roles of moral philosopher and political economist, was as distinguished in his time for *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*

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as for *The Wealth of Nations*. It used to be thought that the two Smiths were incongruent—"*Das Adam Smith Problem*," the Germans called it. Recent scholarship has resolved that problem; the two Smiths are now firmly united. The economist Joseph Schumpeter complained that Smith was so steeped in the tradition of moral philosophy derived from scholasticism and natural law that he could not conceive of economics *per se*, an economics divorced from ethics and politics. The point is well taken, although not necessarily in criticism. *The Wealth of Nations* is itself an exercise in moral philosophy, as is evident from its rhetoric: the denunciation of the "clamour and sophistry, "the "impertinent jealousy," "mean rapacity," "mean and malignant expedients," "sneaking arts," "interesting sophistry," and "interested falsehood" of those merchants and manufacturers who espoused "the vile maxim, 'all for themselves, and nothing for other people'," and who furthered their own interests at the expense of "the poor and the indigent."

These sentiments may seem difficult to reconcile with the famous dictum: "It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker, that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their own interest." But this principle was itself predicated on the assumption that the butcher, brewer, and baker abided by the rules of the free market and did not "conspire," "deceive," and "oppress." Under these conditions, self-interest was a moral principle conducive to the general interest—not as lofty as altruism, but in the marketplace especially, more reliable and effective.

Smith's "general interest" was not Rousseau's or Hegel's. Theirs transcended the sum of individual interests; Smith's was simply the totality of interests of all the members of society, including the working classes. This was perhaps the most novel aspect of *The Wealth of Nations*. The title referred not to the nation as the mercantilist understood it—the nation-state whose wealth was the measure of its strength vis-a-vis other states—but to the people comprising the nation. It was their interests, their wealth that would be promoted by a political economy that would bring about a "universal opulence which extends itself to the lowest ranks of the people."

> Servants, labourers and workmen of different kinds make up the far greater part of every great political society.... No society can

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> surely be flourishing and happy, of which the far greater part of the members are poor and miserable. It is but equity, besides, that they who feed, clothe and lodge the whole body of the people should have such a share of the produce of their own labour as to be themselves tolerably well fed, clothed and lodged.

Defying the received wisdom of the time, Smith took a positive view of high wages because he had a benign view of the laboring poor. "Where wages are high, we shall always find the workmen more active, diligent, and expeditious, than where they are low." In the same spirit, he supported proportional taxation, and taxes on luxuries rather than necessities, so that "the indolence and vanity of the rich is made to contribute in a very easy manner to the relief of the poor." He had no objection to the poor laws; what he did oppose, and vigorously, was the act of settlement that established residency requirements for the poor, limiting their opportunities for improvement and depriving them of the "natural liberty" enjoyed by other Englishmen. More significant, because it seemed to go against the grain of the principle of laissez-faire, was his proposal for a state-administered, state-supported, state-enforced system of education for the "common people," including those "bred to the lowest occupation."

In 1776, when the *Wealth of Nations* was published, these were powerful, if heterodox, views. It was not long, however, before that book had become a classic in its own time. The first edition (a formidable two-volume work of over a thousand pages) sold out in six months, a second was published two years later, and three others followed in the dozen years before Smith's death. Hume immediately declared himself his disciple, and others, across the political spectrum, soon followed: Edmund Burke and Thomas Paine, Edward Gibbon and Richard Price, William Pitt and Lord North.

The new humanitarianism

These interlocking strains of thought—the moral philosophy of compassion, the Wesleyan gospel of good works, and the political economy of natural liberty—combined to create what the evangelical writer Hannah More called (not entirely in praise) "the Age of Benevolence," and what a later historian described as the "new humanitarianism." Earlier in the

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century, Mandeville had complained of the charity schools inspired by Shaftesbury's "affection" for society and "propensity to seek the welfare of it." Fifteen years later, he would have had much more to complain about. A *History of London* published in 1739 gives a detailed account of the schools, hospitals, almhouses, and charitable societies flourishing in the metropolis. "As opulency and riches," the author wrote, "are the result of commerce, so are learning, hospitality, and charity the effects thereof." By 1756, when the second edition appeared, this section of the book had to be greatly expanded to accommodate the many new societies established in the interim. Samuel Johnson wryly commented, "Every hand is open to contribute something, every tongue is busied in solicitations, and every art of pleasure is employed for a time in the interest of virtue." Toward the end of the century (and the end of his life), John Wesley observed that while "luxury and profaneness" had unhappily increased, so had "benevolence and compassion toward all forms of human woe ... in a manner not known before, from the earliest ages of the world."

If "benevolence" and "compassion" were keywords of the time, so were "philanthropy" and "philanthropist," the latter applied to those gentlemen—John Howard, Jonas Hanway, Thomas Gilbert, and others—who made of philanthropy a full-time, voluntary, unpaid profession. There were societies for every kind of worthy purpose: for "Promoting Christian Knowledge" (by means of the charity schools, among other things), for "Bettering the Condition and Increasing the Comforts of the Poor," for the abolition of the slave trade, and for the care of deserted infants, sick and maimed seamen, orphans of clergymen, prostitutes, the deaf, dumb, and blind. And there were abundant proposals for reform: of the legal system, the poor law, hospitals, prisons, and workhouses. Even people skeptical of such efforts found some cause to elicit their sympathy. Defoe wrote a tract in favor of foundling hospitals; Mandeville approved of poor relief for the aged and sick; and Hannah More was an enthusiastic supporter of Sunday schools.

The Sunday school movement itself was significant, as much as a social phenomenon as a religious or educational one. Started in 1785 as a joint venture of Anglicans and Dissenters, the schools had, by the turn of the century, an enrollment of

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over 200,000. Some historians have made much of the insistence of Hannah More and others that instruction be confined to reading, especially of the Bible, on the theory that writing would encourage the children to "rise above their station." In fact, many of the schools did teach writing and arithmetic as well, as is evident from the records of expenditures on spelling books, slates, pencils, and desks. The schools also had the effect of fostering the same kind of communal spirit that Methodism did. School outings, teas, and clubs made them, as the leading historian of the movement noted, "a central feature of working-class community life"—all the more because the teachers often consisted of former students and parents.

It was in the same communal spirit, and the spirit of self-help, that the poor were providing for themselves by subscribing to "friendly societies," a form of insurance to help them in time of need. By 1801 there were more than 7,000 such societies with a membership of two-thirds of a million adult males —this out of a total population of nine million. And all of this, it must be remembered, was in addition to poor relief. England was the first country (and for a long time the only one) to have a public, secular, national (although locally administered) system of poor relief. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, that system had been much expanded with the adoption of something like a family allowance for the working poor as well as the indigent. It was not a radical or revolutionary but the Tory Samuel Johnson who said: "A decent provision for the poor is the true test of civilization.... The condition of the lower order, the poor especially, was the true mark of national discrimination."

It was this social ethic, a compound of the secular and the religious, the private and the public, that was largely responsible for what the French historian Elie Halévy called "the miracle of modern England"—the fact that England was able to survive the economic revolution without succumbing to the political revolutions that wrought havoc on the continent. Before writing the classic history in which he developed that theory, he wrote two little-known articles entitled "The Birth of Methodism in England." It was there that he reflected on the convergence of secular and religious thought that was to prove decisive in this critical period of English history. A half

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century after the birth of Methodism, he wrote, "freethinkers in association with the philanthropists of the evangelical movement would work for the material and moral betterment of the poor. In the interval, they were 'converted' to philanthropy through the influence of Methodist preachers."

The French Enlightenment

This was the Enlightenment as the British experienced it. But it is not the Enlightenment generally associated with that term. *The* "Enlightenment" is identified with the French Enlightenment, a movement that includes thinkers who disagreed among themselves but disagreed even more (with the exception of Montesquieu) with their British counterparts. It is remarkable that the two Enlightenments were so different, in substance as well as temper, considering the great degree of interaction between them. The leading figures in both countries knew and visited each other, read, reviewed, even translated each other—and respectfully but firmly differed from each other, in philosophy, sensibility, and social policy.

Tocqueville attributed their differences to the distinctive roles assumed by the intellectuals in each country.

> In England writers on the theory of government and those who actually governed cooperated with each other, the former setting forth their new theories, the latter amending or circumscribing these in the light of practical experience. In France, however, precept and practice were kept quite distinct and remained in the hands of two quite independent groups. One of these carried on the actual administration while the other set forth the abstract principles on which good government should, they said, be based; one took the routine measures appropriate to the needs of the moment, the other propounded general laws without a thought for their practical application; one group shaped the course of public affairs, the other that of public opinion.

There were other compelling reasons for the disparities between the French and British Enlightenments: the very different political and social systems in the two countries, the different relationship of the monarchy to the aristocracy and of the aristocracy to the middle classes, the different role of the church in the state and the different nature of the church itself. But no less important were the philosophical differ-

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ences that underlay Tocqueville's observation. Where the British idea of compassion lent itself to a variety of practical, meliorative policies to relieve social problems, the French appeal to reason could be satisfied with nothing less than the "regeneration" of man.

It is curious that just as the term "Enlightenment" has been claimed for the French, so has the word "compassion." Yet it was the English who introduced that word and idea long before the French and made it the central theme of their moral philosophy. In the *Encyclopédie*, "compassion" earned only a very brief entry, concluding with the observation that the more miserable one is, the more susceptible to compassion, which is why the people love to watch executions. Rousseau, who is generally credited with the idea of compassion, spoke more often of "pity" and gave it an ambiguous role in society. In the *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality*, pity appears as a "natural sentiment" only in the state of nature, where it contributes to the preservation of the species by moderating the force of self-love (*amour de soi-même*). In civil society, however, pity is replaced by the "factitious" sentiment of vanity (*amour propre*), which destroys both equality and freedom, subjugating mankind to "labor, servitude and misery." Reviewing the *Discourses*, Adam Smith criticized Rousseau for sharing Mandeville's view that "there is in man no powerful instinct which necessarily determines him to seek society for its own sake," and that society itself is an instrument of "the cunning and the powerful" desiring to maintain their superiority over the weak.

Rousseau's *Emile* does posit an "inner sentiment," as the basis not of compassion but of self-love and justice. "When the strength of an expansive soul makes me identify myself with my fellow, and I feel that I am so to speak, in him, it is in order not to suffer that I do not want him to suffer. I am interested in him for love of myself.... Love of men derived from love of self is the principle of human justice." The social virtues do not come naturally to Emile; he has to learn them by becoming involved with those less fortunate than he. But he must also learn that "his first duty is toward himself." And he is instructed to exercise the social virtues not in relation to particular individuals but to the "species," the "whole of man-

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kind." It does not matter, he is told, who gets "a greater share of happiness"; all that matters is that it contributes to "the greatest happiness of all." "This is the wise man's first interest after his private interest, for each is part of his species and not of another individual."

> To prevent pity from degenerating into weakness, it must, therefore, be generalized and extended to the whole of mankind. Then one yields to it only insofar as it accords with justice, because of all the virtues justice is the one that contributes most to the common good of men. For the sake of reason, for the sake of love of ourselves, we must have pity for our species still more than for our neighbor.

Whatever Rousseau's differences with the other *philosophes* (and they were many), they had this in common: the tendency to "generalize" the virtues, to elevate "the whole of mankind" over the "individual," the "species" over one's "neighbor." When Francis Hutcheson spoke of the "greatest happiness for the greatest numbers," he meant this in the most prosaic, quantitative sense; when Rousseau spoke of the "greatest happiness of all," he meant it in some transcendent, metaphysical sense, a "common good of men" that was something other than the good of individual men.

Moreover, the "common good of men" did not necessarily mean the good of the common man. In *Emile*, Rousseau's great work on education, the common man figures not at all. Emile himself is of "noble birth," and his education is undertaken by a private tutor. "The poor man," Rousseau wrote, "does not need to be educated. His station gives him a compulsory education. He could have no other." The same message appears in *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloise*: "Do not at all instruct the villager's child, for it is not fitting that he be instructed; do not instruct the city dweller's child, for you do not know yet what instruction is fitting for him."

The common people

Even the most sympathetic commentator on the French Enlightenment cannot fail to observe the *philosophes'* disdain for the masses. Voltaire used the terms *"le peuple"* and *"la canaille"* [the rabble] almost interchangeably. "As for the

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canaille," he told d'Alembert, "I have no concern with it; it will always remain *canaille*." And it would remain *canaille* because it was ineducable. The people would never have "the time and the capacity to instruct themselves; they will die of hunger before they become philosophers.... We have never pretended to enlighten shoemakers and servants; that is the job of the apostles."

The people could not be educated because they could not be enlightened; and they could not be enlightened because they were incapable of the kind of reason that the *philosophes* took to be the essence of enlightenment. They were mired instead in the prejudices, superstitions, and irrationalities of religion. This was the great enemy—*l'infâme*. Religion, Voltaire wrote to Diderot, "must be destroyed among respectable people and left to the *canaille* large and small, for whom it was made." Diderot agreed. The poor were "imbeciles" in matters of religion, "too idiotic—bestial—too miserable, and too busy" to enlighten themselves. They would never change: "The quantity of the *canaille* is just about always the same."

The *Encyclopédie* reflected this disdain for the unenlightened. In Diderot's article defining the purpose of the *Encyclopédie*, he made it clear that the common people had no part in the "philosophical age" ushered in by his enterprise. "The general mass of mankind can neither follow nor comprehend this march of the human spirit." "We must reason about all things," he wrote in another article, "because man is not just an animal but an animal who reasons; ... whoever refuses to search for that truth renounces the very nature of man and should be treated by the rest of his species as a wild beast; and once the truth has been discovered, whoever refuses to accept it is either insane or wicked and morally evil." In yet another article he explained that one must distrust the judgment of the "multitude" in matters of reason and philosophy because "its voice is that of wickedness, stupidity, inhumanity, unreason and prejudice." "The multitude," he concluded, is "ignorant and stupefied."

The *Encyclopédie* was, to be sure, very appreciative of the "mechanical arts," and its pages contain copious drawings, diagrams, and plates illustrating them. And it professed great respect for the artisans who practiced those arts. It also ob-

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jected to the inequalities of wealth that kept some people in a condition of excessive luxury while others were deprived of the barest necessities of life. But it had little patience and less regard for the great mass of the people who were not artisans, who were not educated or educable, and its pages contained few practical proposals to alleviate their condition. Turgot was the rare *philosophe* who was also a reformer; in his brief time as comptroller-general of finance, he abolished compulsory labor on the roads. But even he was hostile to charity, not only because it was administered by the church but also because he deplored its practical effects. "The poor," he wrote in the *Encyclopédie*, "have incontestable rights on the abundance of the rich"; it is a duty, prescribed by both humanity and religion to alleviate these unfortunates, and it is the function of charitable foundations to do that. The results, however, had been unfortunate, for those countries where charity was most abundant were also those where misery was most widespread. The reason was simple. "To permit a large number of men to live free of charge is to encourage laziness and all the disorders that follow; it is to render the condition of the idler preferable to that of the man who works.... The race of industrious citizens is replaced by a vile population composed of vagabond beggars free to commit all sorts of crimes." In another article, Diderot echoed these sentiments, criticizing the poorhouses as refuges for professional beggars. This ill-conceived charity produced masses of "young and vigorous idlers" who preferred to get their sustenance free rather than work; they were the "vermin" produced by a state that did not value real men.

Something like this argument, expressed far more temperately, was advanced in England toward the end of the century by Malthus and others, who proposed (unsuccessfully) the abolition of the poor law. But they were criticizing an ever-expanding system of public relief, which did not exist at all in France; and they were tolerant of private charities, which were much more numerous in England than in France.[2]

[2] The Malthusianism and Ricardianism of the early nineteenth century, and the Darwinism of mid-century, provided the framework for a very different social ethic, one rooted in the implacable facts, as was thought, of economics and biology. This ethic recognized no moral or social imperatives, no principle of

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To make a new people

One cannot saddle the Enlightenment with responsibility for the deeds, or misdeeds, of the French Revolution. Yet there is no doubt that some of the principles and attitudes of the French Enlightenment were carried over into the Revolution—anti-clericalism, for example, resulting in the emancipation of Protestants and Jews and the legalization of civil marriage and divorce. Similarly, the *philosophes'* indifference (or worse) to the poor is reflected in the fact that, apart from the abolition of feudal privileges, little was done to alleviate the condition of the poor, and such measures as were attempted were notably unsuccessful. The workshops established by the *Comité de Mendicité* proved so unwieldy that they had to be suspended, and the laws regulating prices, wages, and the production of food were not only ineffectual but counterproductive. Most historians agree that the poor, bereft of the old religious charities, were worse off at the end of the Revolution than at the beginning.

As with poverty, so with education: Here too the situation was exacerbated, the old Church-run schools having been abolished with nothing to replace them. In 1791, Condorcet wrote a report on public education for the Assembly recommending, among other things, village schools for children between the ages of nine and thirteen. Perhaps because of the outbreak of war the following year, it was put off for discussion, so that for the first three years of the Revolution the subject of education was never officially raised. In 1793, Robespierre presented a plan for compulsory education—in boarding schools, where the children would be protected from the insidious influence of reactionary parents. Although this was passed by the Convention, its essential provisions were eliminated. Only after Thermidor did the Directory promulgate an educational code providing for a minimal elementary education to be paid for by parents.

It is not a historian but a modern philosopher who has

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compassion or innate moral sense that might override the individualism of the marketplace or the struggle for survival in society as in nature. Elements of the old ethic, however, survived, so that social policies and attitudes were never as amoral or asocial as the theory would have it.

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made of the French Revolution a social revolution, with a conscious, overt, truly revolutionary social ethic and agenda. For Hannah Arendt, the Revolution was "born out of compassion" for the "low people," *les misérables.* This "passion of compassion," first articulated by Rousseau and carried out by his disciple Robespierre, inevitably culminated in the Terror, for that passion responded only to "necessity, the urgent needs of the people," leaving no room for law or government, for liberty or even reason. Thus the Rights of Man had to yield to the Rights of the Sans-Culottes, and the "despotism of liberty" to the "welfare of the people."

This is a moving but, I believe, fanciful reading of history. The Revolution was not a social revolution, and the Terror was instituted not for the welfare of the people but for "public safety," the safety of the regime. The Republic of Virtue celebrated not the virtue of compassion but that of reason—an abstract, elevated reason that denigrated the practical reason of ordinary people. Its profession of equality was similarly abstract, conferring no real, existential equality upon the populace. *"Le peuple,"* in whose name Robespierre established the Republic, was not the people in any ordinary sense, still less *les misérables*, but a singular, abstract "people" represented by an appropriately singular and abstract "general will." Robespierre might have been quoting Rousseau when he said, "The people is always worth more than individuals.... The people is sublime, but individuals are weak."

This "people" required not so much education as commonly understood (literacy), not even reformation in the usual sense (the alleviation of abuses and grievances), but nothing less than "regeneration." It was in the name of regeneration that Robespierre defended his proposal for boarding schools: "I am convinced of the necessity of bringing about a complete regeneration, and, if I may express myself so, of creating a new people." This idea of "regeneration," the historian Mona Ozouf observes, was a key concept of revolutionary discourse, connoting nothing less than the creation of a "new people," a term that had often been invoked, but by no one so fervently as Rousseau, which is "one of the reasons why the Revolution was all his from the beginning."

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Reason vs. compassion

In Britain, where the "passion for compassion" (in Hannah Arendt's memorable phrase) first arose, it took the form not of regeneration but of melioration. Secular and religious institutions, civil society and the state, public relief and private charity complemented and cooperated with each other. Above all, there was no *Kulturkampf*, no religious war, to distract and divide the country, pitting the past against the future, creating an unbridgeable divide between reason and religion, and making social reform hostage to antireligious passion. The British Enlightenment, one might say, was latitudinarian, compatible with a large spectrum of belief and disbelief (just as Wesleyanism itself was compatible with both Anglicanism and Dissent). A book on the British Enlightenment could never bear the subtitle that Peter Gay gave to the first volume of his work on the Enlightenment, *The Rise of Modern Paganism*. Even Hume, skeptical in matters of faith and fearful of religious zealotry, was a staunch supporter of the established church, if only as a corrective to zealotry. And Gibbon, contrary to the popular view, was not hostile to Christianity as such; it was as a Protestant distressed by what he took to be the perversions of the original faith of the gospels that he criticized the church in antiquity. He disapproved, he wrote in his memoirs, of the "intolerant zeal" of the *philosophes*: "They laughed at the skepticism of Hume, preached the tenets of atheism with the bigotry of dogmatists, and damned all believers with ridicule and contempt."

This may be the most striking contrast between the two Enlightenments. As there had been no Reformation in France, so there was no equivalent to Methodism, no religious revival to animate the established church or provide a religious alternative to it, and thus no opportunity to enlist religion in humanitarian causes. But it was not only the identification of the absolute monarchy with the Catholic church that made the *philosophes* so unremittingly hostile to Catholicism in particular and to religion in general. It was also their reverence for reason, which made them antagonistic to everything and everyone redolent of religion. They had no sympathy for *les misérables* because they had no respect for those so unenlightened as to be religious. To be wanting in reason was to

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be deficient as a human being. This was the ultimate expression of rationalism as the *philosophes* understood it: a rejection not only of institutional religion, not only of religion per se, but of the religious conception of man—man who is truly human simply by virtue of being born in the image of God.

In this sense, the British, even the most secular of them and even the least democratic of them, were more egalitarian than the French. They were not about to admit the lower classes into the polity, but they did not deny their essential humanity. In France, Peter Gay explains, the campaign to eliminate torture, to abolish the Jesuits, or to spread technological knowledge was part of "the struggle to impose man's rational will on the environment." The motive for reform was quite different in England. There the campaign for the reform of prisons, the abolition of the slave trade, or the promotion of education was motivated not by "rational will" but by humanitarian zeal, by compassion rather than reason.

Tocqueville was speaking of the French revolutionaries—but he might have been of the *philosophes*—when he said that their "salient characteristic" was a loss of faith that upset their "mental equilibrium." The vacuum in their soul was promptly filled by the ideal of the perfectibility of man. "They had a fanatical faith in their vocation—that of transforming the social system, root and branch, and regenerating the whole human race." They adored the human intellect and had supreme confidence in its power to transform laws, institutions, and customs. But the intellect they adored was only their own. "I could mention several," Tocqueville sardonically observed, "who despised the public almost as heartily as they despised the Deity." This was very different, he added, from the respect shown by Englishmen and Americans for the opinions of the majority of their countrymen. "Their intellect is proud and self-reliant, but never insolent; and it has led to liberty, while ours has done little but invent new forms of servitude."

Tocqueville did not mention Adam Smith in this connection, but he was a perfect examplar of the Englishman he was describing and a perfect foil to the *philosophe*. For Smith, the defining attributes of human nature were not so much reason and intellect as interests and passions, feelings and sympa-

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thies. These were qualities shared by people of all classes, even the poorest and least educated. They were modest qualities—as modest as "the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange." But they were sufficient to achieve the well-being of individuals as well as society. No enlightened despot, not even an enlightened philosopher or legislator, was required to activate these qualities or to harmonize them for the general good.

Nor was the philosopher, Smith believed, innately superior to the common man. Indeed, the distinction between the philosopher and the laborer was more the product of nurture (as we would now say) than of nature. "The difference between the most dissimilar characters, between a philosopher and a common street porter, for example, seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom, and education.... By nature a philosopher is not in genius and disposition half so different from a street porter, as a mastiff is from a greyhound." One cannot imagine Voltaire or Diderot (or even Rousseau) likening himself to a street porter. It took one of Britain's most illustrious philosophers to do so.

In those few sentences, Smith encapsulated the contrast between the two Enlightenments. Smith did not deny the "difference of talents" (as he put it); on the contrary, he insisted upon it. It was that difference that emerged and flourished in a society committed to "natural liberty." Such a society respected the liberty of human beings to be different, and at the same time the equality of human beings in their essential nature. The *philosophes* by contrast, committed to the principle of reason, a reason not accessible to all people, had no rationale for a liberal society, let alone a democratic one.

The two Enlightenments today

The two Enlightenments were not a passing phase of history. If we still debate their character, it is not only as an exercise in the intellectual history of the eighteenth century (although that is warrant enough), but as a forecast of the social history of later times. The spirit of the French Enlightenment may be seen in communism, for example, which aspired to the "regeneration" of man, the creation of a "new people" liberated from the old pieties and constraints; or in

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socialism, which sought the "common good of men" in a society and economy that transcended the good and the will of individual men; or in the welfare state, with its penchant for social-engineering, which could well be described as "the struggle to impose man's rational will on the environment"; or in the modern disposition for "value-free" social policies inspired by an ostensibly "value-free" social ethic, which recalls the "reason" that the *philosophes* valued so highly.

In the last few years, we have been witnessing—in the United States, if not in Britain—something like a turning away from the French Enlightenment and toward the British. It is curious to find social thinkers and policy makers recapitulating, unwittingly, the essential ingredients of the British Enlightenment: the idea of compassion that was at the heart of this moral philosophy; the political economy that made of natural liberty a moral as well as economic principle; and the evangelical movement that played so large a part in the philanthropic and humanitarian spirit of the time. It was an impressive, not predictable, and perhaps not entirely compatible conjunction of forces that made up the British Enlightenment. And it is a no less impressive, unpredictable, and somewhat incompatible conjunction of forces that are defining—or redefining—the social ethic today.

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The British underclass: Ten years later

CHARLES MURRAY

As the 1980s came to an end, the *Sunday Times* asked me to come to England and look at the country's social problems through the eyes of an American who had been writing about the American underclass. The questions: Does England have an underclass? If so, is it big or small? Stable, shrinking, or growing?

When I wrote in the *Times* that England did indeed have an underclass, small but growing, the news had no natural constituency. Conservative politicians were embarrassed that crime, unemployment, and illegitimacy had soared conspicuously on their watch, and would just as soon have ignored the whole thing. The Left, ordinarily delighted to blame anything on Margaret Thatcher, couldn't admit that crime really was rising and large numbers of people were exploiting the dole

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without sounding like conservatives. As for unmarried women having babies, it was a good sign, not a bad one, that women were no longer forced into marriage just because they got pregnant. From Left and Right alike, the notion of an English underclass was generally dismissed as an attempt to impose an American paradigm on English problems that were not really so terrible anyway.

Ten years later, the England I had written about in 1989 was a much different place. In 1989, England was in the beginnings of recovery after wrenching economic dislocations earlier in the decade; in 1999, England was six years into an economic expansion. In 1989, a Tory was at 10 Downing Street and the Labour party was in shambles; by 1999, that had changed to a Labourite Prime Minister and a Conservative party in shambles. And what had been a nascent underclass in 1989 had by 1999 become one that increasingly resembled, in behavior and proportional size, the underclass that we have learned to live with in America.

Before I make that case, let me be clear on terminology. By underclass, I do not mean people who are merely poor, but rather people at the margins of society, unsocialized and often violent. The chronic criminal is part of the underclass, especially the violent chronic criminal. But so are parents who mean well but who cannot provide for themselves, who give nothing back to the neighborhood, and whose children are the despair of the teachers who have to deal with them.

In real life, people seldom fall into neat categories. The dole came into being because many hardworking people were down on their luck and needed a few months of tiding-over. It still serves that purpose for some people, and they bear no resemblance to the underclass. For that matter, the criminal can be a loyal friend to those he chooses not to assault and rob. The single mother whose children are out of control may be the backbone of her neighborhood in other ways.

But the complexities of individuals do not trump statistical tendencies. My thesis in 1989 was that large increases in the three indicators I used then—dropout from the labor force among young males, violent crime, and births to unmarried women—would be associated with the growth of a class of violent, unsocialized people who, if they became sufficiently

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numerous, would fundamentally degrade the life of society. Where did England stand by 1999?

Unemployment

Dropout from the labor force among young adult males is an important indicator that an underclass has formed because it reflects such a clear departure from the age-old norm that young adult males work regularly and work hard—supporting wives and children, siblings or parents, or at the very least, supporting themselves. But the percentage of young men who are not employed, the simple statistic used to track changes in that norm, is laden with ambiguities. Young men who are listed as unemployed can be in school, trying unsuccessfully to find a job, idle on the dole, officially on the dole but actually holding a job, or active in the criminal economy. To complicate matters further, changes in the overall health of the economy can mask underlying changes in the propensity to work.

The short story is that the percentage of young working-aged males not in employment was dramatically higher in 1999 than it had been in 1989. Among males ages 18 to 24, the percentage not employed shot up from 20.5 percent in 1989 to 31.2 percent in 1999, an increase of more than half. Judging from the more detailed age breakdowns available through 1997, dropout from the labor force was largest in the age group that has the fewest excuses for not working, those between the ages of 20 and 24.

There is no obvious benign explanation for these large increases in young males out of employment. A worsening economy is not to blame—the overall national unemployment rate was lower in 1999 than in 1989. The percentage of men 18 to 24 in school did not change appreciably—the increases in people in higher education since 1989 have been concentrated among young women and among people of both sexes ages 30 and older. Since 1994, the number of men in their twenties who are in higher education has actually been falling. What has been happening? The trend conforms exactly to what one would expect from a growing underclass, but a complete analysis by geographic region and condition of prior employment will be necessary before the numbers can be fully un-

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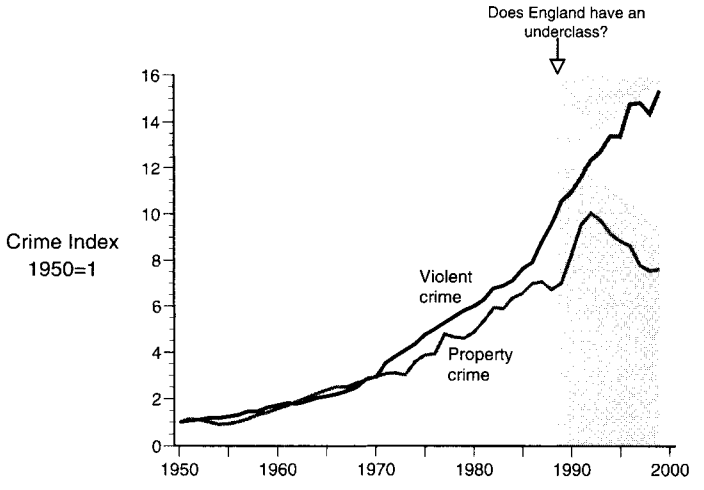
derstood. At the very least, the magnitude of the raw increase demands attention.

Violent crime

The story-line for violent crime is more transparent. Figure 1 nearby shows the trend lines for violent crime and property crime since 1950. The shaded area highlights the change in the 10 years since my 1989 assessment. (Note that in 1999 the British government introduced a new method of counting offenses that substantially increases the apparent crime rate. Everything that follows is based on the old counting rules.)

Figure 1



Source: Home Office statistics for England and Wales. Trendlines are based on notifiable offences per 100,000 people.

In 1989, I observed that a sure way for an American visitor to provoke scornful disbelief was by saying that England had a higher rate of property crime than the United States. That is now old news—even after the drop in property crime since 1993, England's property crime rate remains close to twice as great (contemplate that for a moment: *twice* as great) as that in the United States. The new news is that in 1996 England

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took the lead from America in violent crime as well—to put it technically, the sum of offenses categorized as violence against the person, sexual offenses, and robbery, expressed as offenses per 100,000 people, outstripped the index for comparable offenses in the United States and has remained higher since then. We can argue about the exact percentages in the English-U.S. comparisons because the definitions of offenses in the two countries are not exactly parallel. But the basic patterns I describe are not subject to debate. Robbery is still somewhat higher in the United States than in England, and homicide is still much higher. But dramatic as homicide and robbery are, they are numerically a small part of the crime problem. Crime overall, both violent and property, is higher in England than in the United States.

I emphasize the comparison to drive home a historical point. From the mid nineteenth century through the first three quarters of this century, the United States was seen as a violent, unruly society, one that offered a lot of personal freedom but was not very civilized. During the same period, England was seen, rightly, as the most civilized country on earth. Other countries on the continent had low crime rates, but they also had traditions and institutions of authoritarian control. England enjoyed extraordinarily low crime *and* extraordinary freedom. It was a unique, magnificent achievement, proving to the world that liberty and safety are compatible; proving, indeed, that a genuinely civil society is possible. No longer. England is just another high-crime industrialized country.

The contrast between the trend lines for property and violent crime is instructive. Why should property crime have gone down while violent crime has continued to rise? Conventional wisdom notwithstanding, better economic times do not account for much if any of the drop in property crime—the statistical relationship between unemployment and crime is weak. Part of the answer is that property crime lends itself to technical solutions. Compare the anti-theft devices on today's automobiles with those of 1989. Contemplate the presence of high-tech security systems in stores and homes in the better parts of town compared to their presence in 1989. For that matter, many readers can document these changes simply by looking at changes in their own protections against property

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crime since 1989. At the outset of the rise in crime, England was a very easy place to steal things. Now it is much harder.

Another part of the answer may lie in the increased use of prison. Between 1950 and 1993, English crime became much less risky—a point that I have previously made at length in *Does Prison Work?*.[1] England might have had a low crime rate and unobtrusive police in the first half of the century, but the chances of getting caught if you committed a crime were high, and the chances of going to prison if you were caught were also high. The risk of imprisonment began to fall in the mid 1950s, and, after a few years' lag time, crime began to rise. The risk continued to fall and crime began to rise faster. Since 1993, the risk of imprisonment has been rising and property crime has been falling. Conceivably, a causal relationship is at work here.

Violent crime is different from property crime in several respects. It is different first in its location. Property crime occurs in affluent neighborhoods as well as in poor ones. Not equally—poor neighborhoods suffer more than rich ones from all kinds of crime—but affluent neighborhoods are where the best things to steal are, attracting burglars, car thieves, and shoplifters. In contrast, most violent crime consists of assaults, and assaults do not happen very often in rural areas or in the quiet precincts of the affluent.

Why should violent crime increase so specifically in low-income neighborhoods, and continue to increase even as property crime has declined? It is not because poor people are inherently violent. In 1900, England had many times the number of poor people it has now, and a fraction of the violent crime rate. It is not because of proletarian rage against income inequality. The rich of 1900 led lives much more conspicuously above the rest of society than the rich of 1999. England used to be a much more economically and politically riven society than it is now. But it was united in one crucial respect: a universally shared consensus on what constituted moral standards and civilized behavior. And England used to have hardly any crime at all.

Violent crime also differs from property crime in the de-

[1] Charles Murray, *Does Prison Work?*, London: IEA Health and Welfare Unit, 1997.

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gree of rationality that goes into it. Thievery is often approached in a businesslike way, and is therefore more susceptible to a deterrent effect. Increase the price of stealing by increasing the risk and severity of punishment, and some people will decide, rationally, that the game is no longer worth the candle. Deterrence is much less likely when a person acts out of impulse. Impulsive behavior, part of a general lack of socialization, is a hallmark of the underclass. Most violent crime is of just that sort. Modest increases in the risk of imprisonment are irrelevant. The value of imprisonment for violent people is incapacitation, not deterrence. Prison gets them off the street.

Family breakdown

The link between the rise in violent crime and the nature of the underclass is direct. Over the last two decades, fewer and fewer English children have been socialized to norms of self-control, consideration for others, and the concept that actions have consequences. One of the leading reasons that they have not been socialized to these norms is that fewer and fewer English children are being raised by two mature, married adults. It is as simple as that, and as intractable, which brings us to the last and most important indicator of an underclass: births to unmarried women. The story of the illegitimacy ratio—the percentage of children born out of wedlock—is shown in Figure 2.

In 1969, not really ancient history, only one out of twelve English children was born to an unmarried mother. In 1979, one out of nine. In 1989, one out of four. In 1999, more than one out of three and approaching one out of two-and-a-half.

Does it make any difference? After all, Home Secretary Jack Straw assured England last summer that "we shouldn't get into a paddy about the decline of formal marriage." Other kinds of families, he said, "can do just as well for their children." This statement is true in the trivial sense that there are single mothers, cohabiting couples, and step-families who bring up wonderful children. But many readers of the Home Secretary's words probably understood him to mean that *on average* the children of these nontraditional families do just as well as the children of two formally married biological par-

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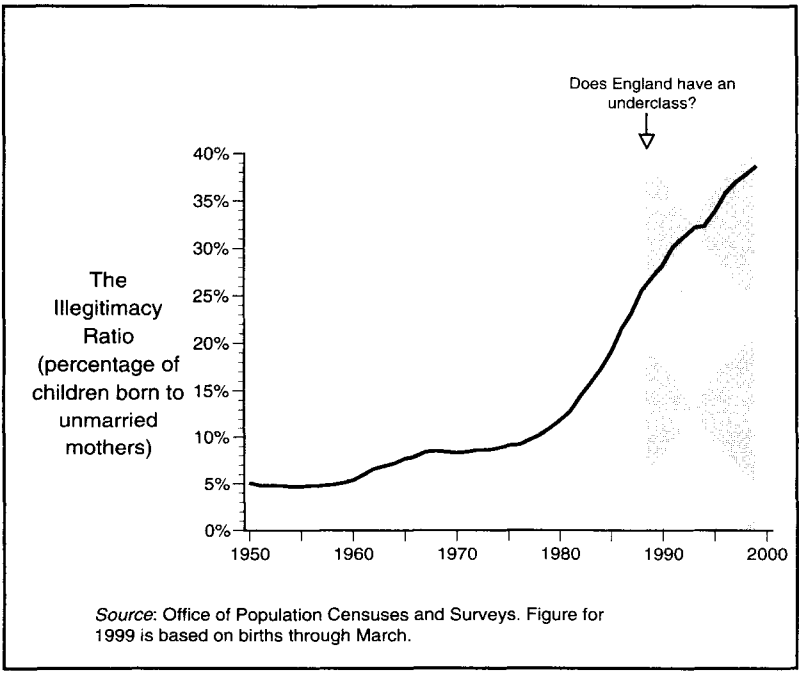
ents. That inference is factually, unequivocally wrong. There may still be rhetorical debate on this issue, but any fair appraisal of the data can lead to only one conclusion: No alternative family structure comes close to the merits of two married parents.

Figure 2



Source: Office of Population Censuses and Surveys. Figure for 1999 is based on births through March.

In 1989, when the technical literature on this topic was just emerging, the balance of scholarly opinion in the United States had already shifted, but there was still at least some room for argument. By the time my follow-up article on the underclass appeared in the *Sunday Times* in 1994,[2] that literature had become so extensive that the remaining scholarly debate in the United States had turned to "how much" rather than "whether" the two-parent family was better for children. Whether a scholar was trying to predict a child's criminality, school grades, income as an adult, or psychological well-being,

[2] See "The Next British Revolution," *The Public Interest*, Number 118, Winter 1995.

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even when the analysis controlled for the family's socioeconomic status, the result was the same. Taken as groups, the children of two married biological parents were found to do much better than the children of single parents, and the children of divorced mothers were found to do much better than the children of never-married mothers.

Two important new findings have emerged since that 1994 follow-up article. First, it has been found that stepfathers are no solution to the problems associated with single parenthood. There is very little difference between the outcomes for children of divorced women and the children of women who remarry. Second, after many years in which the growing problem of child abuse by males was assumed to involve mostly fathers in traditional families, analysts finally began to ask who these abusers were. It turns out that the most serious forms of child abuse are rarely committed by a married biological father but instead are inflicted by a cohabiting boyfriend or stepfather. I should add that there is no reason to think that these latest findings from the United States will have much effect on the rhetoric in England. The idea that children do just as well in single-parent families seems to have become a kind of unshakable folk legend for English politicians and intellectuals.

Two cultures

Young males are dropping out of the labor market, violent crime has risen drastically, and the illegitimacy ratio is at 38 percent and climbing. Trends that in 1989 couldn't possibly continue for another 10 years, it was said, have indeed continued for another 10 years. But so what? Trying to get people's attention about the underclass these days makes me identify with Jeremiah. The economy is humming, stock portfolios are bulging, and many readers may ask, if this growing underclass is as big a problem as Murray says it is, why has English life changed so little?

Whether one asks this question depends upon where one lives. Earlier, I mentioned that violent crime is still rare in rural areas and affluent neighborhoods. There are still many islands in England where life goes on much as it did before. And it just so happens that affluent neighborhoods and pictur-

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esque rural retreats are where the people who run England tend to spend their time. The elites can afford to take a tolerant view of the increase in the violent crime index, because it seldom affects them directly. The same applies to the breakdown of the family. Taking England as a whole, nearly 40 percent of births are out of wedlock. But, as I discussed at length in earlier articles, illegitimacy is overwhelmingly a lower-class phenomenon, despite the publicity given pregnant unmarried celebrities. What this means statistically is that, as of the year 2000, perhaps 10 or 15 percent of births among the professional classes are out of wedlock, while that figure is likely to be well over 50 percent among the unskilled and unemployed. Similar comments can be made about the effects of divorce—in affluent neighborhoods, divorces are not only fewer than in low-income neighborhoods but many of them occur after the children are grown. These differences explain the myopia of elites about the effects of family breakdown. They are living in a world where, in fact, the family still has not broken down. Families with small children by no means function in the same way as they did 30 years ago, but there are only scattered signs of real disaster in the making. For disaster, you have to visit the unfashionable part of town.

In my 1994 follow-up article, I laid out two scenarios for the rest of the century. In one scenario, labeled "Brave New World," the breakdown of the family in the lower classes would spread rapidly throughout society. The other scenario, which I considered more likely, was labeled "the New Victorians and the New Rabble." It hypothesized that the traditional family structure would remain strong, perhaps even strengthen, in the upper half of English society, so that by 2000 the gap between the behavior of the upper and the lower classes would become even wider.

My sense is that the gap in social norms has continued to grow since 1994. I am not forecasting the breakdown of society. It may well be possible, in both the United States and in England, that a society can tolerate a large underclass and continue to prosper. But the costs are great. Crime is a case in point. In America, we are celebrating a 25 percent drop in the violent crime rate since 1991. We have not achieved this by socializing the underclass. We simply just locked up so

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many people—America's prison population will reach two million this year—that the crime rate had to go down. Maybe the same strategy will work for England. Imprison at the same ratio to notifiable offenses that we do—namely, imprison about 650,000 people, about 10 times the number currently imprisoned—and perhaps England too can cut its violent crime problem by 25 percent. But the price is high.

The cost of prison cells is the least of the many prices we as Americans pay. Others are seen in the growing enmity between the underclass and the overclass. They are seen in the generations of children growing up in environments where they will never have a fair chance of becoming the adults they might have been. They are seen in the growth of authoritarian methods of surveillance and social control. These, not general chaos, are the prices of a large underclass. In the United States, they are on the verge of amounting to no less than the repudiation of some of the core ideals on which the nation is based. I see no reason to assume that the underclass will be less costly to England.

The spirit of Robespierre

I am not going to close with the customary "...and here's what needs to be done." I believe the problems of the underclass are driven by the breakdown in socialization of the young, which in turn is driven by the breakdown of the family. But England does not have a government, or for that matter an opposition party, that is even willing to say that the family, traditionally defined, is crucially important, let alone act on that premise. There is little point in talking about solutions until the politicians are prepared to admit that a problem exists. Let me instead close with an appeal to think about the unprecedented nature of the course that our respective countries are taking.

Edmund Burke's central insight was that human institutions evolve and are sustained by deeper forces than any single generation can comprehend. Trying to reinvent the social order by rational calculation, as the French revolutionaries were the first to attempt, is a fool's game. After the disaster of Communism in the twentieth century, Burke's insight is no

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longer much disputed. The Communists' claim that they could create a "New Man" is the laughing-stock of history. And yet what is happening willy-nilly throughout the industrialized West is in its way just as massive a social experiment as anything that Robespierre or Lenin had in mind.

No human institution has roots deeper than marriage, which appears to be a universal law, or what the great anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski called a "principle of legitimacy." Biologically, there is no reason that the human male cannot behave as males behave in many other species—impregnate and disappear. And yet humans have never been known to construct societies on that basis. "The most important moral and legal rule concerning the physiological side of kinship is that no child should be brought into the world without a man—and one man at that—assuming the role of sociological father," Malinowski wrote in *Sex, Culture, and Myth*. The specific variations across cultures are many, he wrote, and "yet through all these variations there runs the rule that the father is indispensable for the full sociological status of the child as well as its mother, that the group consisting of a mother and her offspring is sociologically incomplete and illegitimate."

Primitive cultures have implemented the principle of legitimacy instinctively. All great civilizations have self-consciously come to understand why it arose. The great philosophers of Asia and the West alike have argued, in different ways, that the family is not just one of many social institutions, a nice thing to have if it is convenient, but the indispensable building block of society.

England at the dawn of the new millennium, along with the United States and most European countries, is saying that this ancient and universal social law may be dispensed with. That is what an illegitimacy ratio of 38 percent means. It is not just an abstract statistic but a reflection of something that no human society has tried to do until now.

What leads us to believe that this leap in the dark is an acceptable risk? What is the source of our breathtaking hubris? Certainly not a considered evaluation of the facts. The facts, whether in the form of statistics or in the daily experiences of social workers, police, and teachers, correspond di-

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rectly with age-old beliefs about what will happen if society discards the principle of legitimacy.

Our hubris derives partly from obliviousness. I cannot think of any previous era when history itself—history as a source of lessons about our own best course of action—has been treated with such contempt. Our hubris derives partly from intellectual cowardice. The feminist revolution, for all its good effects, has also shut down certain kinds of public positions. To say that marriage is the foundation of civilization is to know that you will be seen as a Neanderthal who wants women kept barefoot and pregnant; consequently, few people who want to be considered intellectually respectable will say it. Our hubris derives partly from self-indulgence. Sex without commitment can be lots of fun, especially at the ages when families traditionally have gotten started; and, there's no doubt about it, marriage gets in the way of sex without commitment. We have conveniently concluded that what we enjoy is what we should do.

Whatever its complex combination of sources, it is indeed hubris, and we are indeed taking a leap in the dark. We are acting as if all those millennia of human experience, across civilizations and races and cultures, are irrelevant; that our particular generation just happens to have been blessed with the insight to see that everybody else has been wrong; that our generation alone has perceived the truth. Do we really believe that?

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What about the overclass?

MELANIE PHILLIPS

LIKE a number of people, I hate the term "underclass" because it suggests that there is a group of people who are an inferior and frightening breed apart.

Though it would never use the term "underclass," the current British government has accepted the idea, calling it instead "social exclusion." It is the same idea, because the government understands that this is about more than pure poverty. The problem is a life style that is permanently dislocated from the habits and way of life of the majority. At its very heart is the disintegration of the family—high rates of single parenthood and teenage pregnancy, and whole communities where committed fathers are unknown. The lives in these communities are often chaotic. One can find children so unsocialized that they can't even use a knife and fork; who don't know what an alarm clock is because they have no sense of an ordered day; who have no idea how to make social relationships and are aggressive, foul-mouthed, or withdrawn.

There is a serious problem with our very poorest citizens, and the British government has an ambitious program to tackle it, turning out papers on truancy, teenage pregnancy, repairing shattered communities and so forth. All very commendable. But this approach presents the socially excluded as a breed apart, as if their behavior is somehow very different from that of the rest of society. When government officials and advisors talk about drugs, for instance, they say: People like us can handle cocaine or cannabis, but the very poor cannot. On education, they say: Nothing wrong with the education of the top 2 percent; the problems are separate—sink schools, truancy, basic literacy. And with regard to the family, where the most harm is being done to the poor, they say: I cohabit, I'm a

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single parent, so there is nothing wrong with the changing family. It's the poor who are the problem.

THIS attitude is not only hypocritical and unpleasant but also fails to understand how culture works—that social examples matter, that they work from the top down, and that what is supportable behavior among the upper classes can have a disastrous impact on poor people because they lack the soft cushion of money and privilege.

Here I very much disagree with Charles Murray. Family disintegration is certainly not confined to the lowest classes. On the contrary, it was pioneered by the upper classes. Although the social-class figures are incomplete, the birth statistics show that between 1988 and 1998, jointly registered births outside marriage more than doubled in social classes one and two—the top two sociological classes. In classes four and five, by contrast, births outside of marriage only rose by just over 50 percent.

Cohabitation is also on the rise throughout society, with disastrous effects. Very few cohabitations last: The median length is under two years. And although two-thirds turn into marriages, these marriages break down more frequently than those with no preceding cohabitation. Despite the boasts of the elite, only about 5 percent of children are brought up through their entire childhood by cohabiting couples. And even taking into account those children whose cohabiting parents eventually marry, only 36 percent of children born to cohabiting parents are still looked after by both parents by the time they are 16, compared to 70 percent of children born to married couples. In this way, cohabitation is producing more family instability and more single parents. The effects are even more catastrophic in the lowest social classes, where the breakdowns are more numerous.

Certainly, male joblessness and welfare have played an important part in the atomization of the family life of the poor. Between them, these factors have created the presumption among many young women that young men are a waste of space, and that they can have children and go it alone. For the young men, not only does joblessness hurt their marriage prospects, but the collapse of marriage reduces their drive to get and hold a responsible job.

These are all interrelated vicious cycles. Welfare and joblessness play a role, but by themselves they would not create widespread single parenthood. The tinder to which joblessness

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and welfare provide the spark is a culture that has systematically devalued marriage and redefined family as a mother and child, with the committed father as an optional extra.

That culture was created by our elites. Family court judges turned divorce into a conduct and responsibility-free zone. As the marriage contract became of less value than a car-rental agreement, marriage breakup became more and more frequent. The increasingly numerous children in such broken homes are deeply scarred and terrified of commitment. Hence the rise in cohabitation, single parenthood, and "repartnering." We know that by and large the effect of family fragmentation is negative in every area of a child's life. Step-parenting can create even more problems for children. The erosion of commitment, trust, and fidelity is creating a climate of solitariness that will destroy the networks of kinship by which generations look after not only children but the older generation as well.

FACED with this possibility, what is the government's response? A battery of initiatives intended for the socially excluded. But these will not do the most essential thing: shore up the family structure by unequivocally promoting marriage as a social good. Sure, cabinet ministers say that marriage is desirable and that two parents are generally better than one. But they immediately qualify this statement by saying that children can be brought up just as well in any family structure. By and large, this simply isn't true. By denigrating marriage in this manner, they will weaken it further.

So why do they talk down marriage? The response from cabinet ministers and advisors goes something as follows: We must not preach or tell people how to live their lives. We must spare the feelings of those who live in unconventional family units. The idea that tax incentives and benefits should favor marriage is ridiculous because financial incentives do not alter behavior. We must be neutral about family structure and instead put children's interests first. It is important that children continue to have contact with their fathers, even if the fathers are not part of the family. Fathers must be held responsible, and so we will chase them through the Child Support Agency. As for teenage pregnancy, the key is a good education, and getting girls to have higher ambitions than being a hairdresser. Above all and at all costs, we must avoid repeating the "back to basics" fiasco of the Conservatives—so many ministers themselves can't live up to the marriage ideal! Finally, anyone who wants to restore marriage to its earlier

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form and importance is harking back to a mythical golden age. After all, marriage was only invented in the 1950s, and fatherhood was dreamed up by the late Victorians.

Every single one of these assumptions is wrong, and is making the problem of family breakdown far worse. First, this language of "preaching" and "interfering" grossly misunderstands the significance of marriage and the reasons why the state should be involved. Marriage is not a statement of a private love affair but a public institution for the nurture and socialization of children. If a marriage goes wrong, society has to pick up the pieces. All the traditional legal advantages and social signals associated with marriage existed because the state has a responsibility to promote social rather than antisocial outcomes.

THIS process cannot be value free. Making marriage meaningless means reducing the incentives for individuals to enter into the most secure and successful structure for the rearing of children. As for sparing feelings, is it not more important to prevent harm? If you talk to children from single-parent homes, you often find that their most powerful wish is never to do to their own children what has been done to them. By failing to educate them about what marriage is for, why it is so important, and why it is in the best interest not only of children but also of men and women, our elites are helping to guarantee that those children will make precisely the same mistakes, despite what they most dearly want.

Moreover, so-called value-free policies have created a financial penalty against marriage, a penalty that has been increasing for years. Now Britain's working-families tax credit (WFTC) is loading the dice against marriage even more. It leaves families headed by married couples much poorer than single persons or other households. In its desperation to drive single parents out to work, the government has created a subsidized childcare industry, redefining the family at the bottom of the income scale as a mother-and-child unit to which all benefits are given, making it easier to dispense with men. Instead of a family wage, we now have a single-parent family wage!

Cabinet ministers and advisors say that financial incentives have no effect on family behavior: a remarkable assertion from a government whose policies, from restoring the work ethic to encouraging breastfeeding, are all about using financial incentives to change behavior. Instead, they claim to be putting

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children's interests first, interests that they tend to define in economic terms alone. Certainly, we should be concerned about children living in poverty. But single parents are poor principally because they are single parents—it is very hard not to be poor when raising a child on one wage. The greatest harm to children comes from being without fathers. A policy that condones or promotes fatherlessness puts children's interests last.

Because the government is desperate to avoid being judgmental about marriage, it has devised a number of displacement exercises to help it appear to be shoring up family life. It has done this by defining the family as anything anyone wants it to be and by being generous to everybody. So we are told it is possible to be as good a father living apart from a family as when still there. The concept of the male breadwinner has become taboo, except when the marriage has broken down or never happened in the first place. When men are around, the traditional role of breadwinning is said to make them bad fathers because they are not available to change the nappies. If the marriage breaks down, though, men will be pursued for every penny they have. So the good father has been reduced to a sperm donor, a walking wallet, or mother's au-pair.

Is it surprising that "socially excluded" young men now run from marriage? Is it any wonder that with young men not earning a family wage, it is not in a young woman's interest to get married? Welfare means she can survive reasonably well, given the appallingly low expectations of life she has formed from seeing the similar lives of her friends, her mother, and her mother's friends. Yet our elites say fatuously that teenage pregnancy results from a lack of sex education. On the contrary, all children get in schools is sex education; what has gone out the window is morality.

INSTEAD of working out ways of restoring incentives for marriage, our elites rubbish it in private and in public. Terrified of being held responsible for their own behavior, they have abandoned their duty to set an example. Indeed, the very notion of setting an example is regarded with horror as "elitist." Yet that's what elites are supposed to be: elitist. Once they regarded it as their duty to promote bourgeois values by personal example and in public policy. These values were thought to be a way of raising the sights of the lowest, enabling them to rise out of poverty and social disadvantage. That project has been turned on its head. Bourgeois values

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have become despised. Marriage was attacked; literacy was attacked; formal sanctions enforcing civilized behavior through criminal punishment, and informal sanctions enforcing it through stigma, were attacked. The very idea of the respectable and normal came to be seen as oppressive. The unrespectable and abnormal became not just tolerated but *de rigeur*.

The outcome is that the "socially excluded" are no longer just poor but are the victims of anti-education, anti-marriage policies that have undermined personal responsibility. To be called a moralizer, after all, is now our greatest insult. The result is that behavior among the elites that is painful, but is survivable, is being passed down to the lowest classes for whom it is a disaster. Social exclusion cannot be tackled properly unless its roots in the feckless behavior of the overclass, the intellectual and political elites, is addressed as well.

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America—idea or nation?

WILFRED M. McCLAY

AT first glance, American patriotism seems a simple matter. But it is simple only until one actually starts to think about it, inquire after its sources, and investigate its manifestations. Consider a small but significant case in point, an observation recently made by a distinguished rabbi who serves a large and prosperous Reform congregation in the New York suburbs. This man takes the business of premarital counseling very seriously, and therefore gets to know many of his congregation's younger members in a fairly intimate way. In the course of interviewing and counseling them over the years, he has discovered an interesting pattern: a high correlation between the level of these young people's patriotic sentiments and the extent of their opposition to intermarriage, meaning marriage to non-Jews. In other words, those with the strongest love of country were also those most firmly committed to marrying only within the Jewish faith. Conversely, those most indifferent or hostile to patriotism were also most likely to have no reservations about

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intermarriage—and most likely to find fault with those who do.

Loyalties large and small

The rabbi's observation rings true to me. And yet if it is true, it would seem to throw much of our conventional wisdom about patriotism into a cocked hat. Don't we generally assume that loyalty to the nation is a form of belonging that tends, as it intensifies, to divert, diminish, or even swallow up lesser loyalties and more particular affiliations? Doesn't the study of European history indicate precisely this, that the modern nation-state grew in power and prestige at the expense of local and regional identities and affinities, including those of religion? Wouldn't it therefore be more reasonable to predict that observant American Jews would value their nation less, because they value their faith more—particularly when theirs is a faith that sets them apart from the vast majority of Americans? And by the same token, wouldn't it stand to reason that intensely patriotic American Jews would see an act of such primal loyalty to the Jewish community, particularly on a matter as personal and intimate as the question of a marriage partner, as an atavism and a betrayal of the American promise of universal liberty and equality?

Reasonable guesses all, except that they happen not to be borne out by this rabbi's experiences. To be sure, this seeming paradox may have a lot to do with the history and current state of the factions within American Jewry. But it also is wonderfully illustrative of a more general truth, which is this: A considerable part of the genius of American patriotism resides in the fact that being a proud and loyal American does not require one to yield up all of one's identity to the nation. On the contrary, American patriotism has generally affirmed and drawn upon the vibrancy and integrity of other, smaller-scale, and relatively independent loyalties. Far from weakening American national sentiment, or causing it to be half-hearted or anemically "thin," these other traditions have strengthened it immeasurably. Nor is this ideal a recent innovation, brought on by the nation's growing ethnic diversity and the vogue of multiculturalism. Instead, it is an ideal as old as the nation itself, going back to the fundamental con-

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cept of a federated republic, which consisted of free and self-governing states, counties, and townships, and which loomed so large in the minds of the nation's Founders.

Needless to say, it has not been an easy ideal to realize or sustain, as recurrent crises in American history from the Whiskey Rebellion to the Civil War to the post-World War II conflicts over school desegregation and voting rights have shown. America's national government has grown steadily in power and influence, and the political, economic, legal, technological, and social forces tending to impose homogeneity upon the national culture are stronger than ever. Yet there is an enduring power in this more diffuse patriotic ideal, which seats the general in the local, and asserts that one does not become more of an American by becoming less of something else—less Southern, less Virginian, less small-town, less black, less Jewish, less whatever.

Of course, there will always be instances in which certain profound loyalties come into conflict, in ways that cannot be reconciled. Such is the human condition, and such is the stuff of civil wars, religious martyrdoms, and Sophoclean tragedies. But the American patriotic ideal has generally been wise and generous about granting the widest possible berth to our disparate loyalties and in assuming a certain respect for the multiplicity of the person. Loyalty, like love, is not necessarily a zero-sum game, in which any loyalty accorded to X is thought to take away from what Y might have received. A husband does not love his wife less because he also loves his children; if anything, the opposite is the case. And, as Burke and Tocqueville both well understood, something of the same is true of political and social life. By giving as free a hand as possible to the "little platoons," local institutions, and independent associations in a free society, the nation not only makes it possible for many citizens to be meaningfully involved in the work of public life but also elicits from them a deep, unfeigned, and uncoerced patriotism. In a word, the health of local and particular freedoms strengthens the nation.

There is another conclusion one might draw from the rabbi's observation. His young congregants' two dispositions—commitment to country and commitment to Jewish law—both presume a certain kind of person, a person who respects the

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sentiment of loyalty, who has the capacity for reverence and gratitude, and who is willing to entertain the thought that it sometimes is right and good to recognize the authority of something larger and older than oneself. Small wonder that his young congregants who lack one disposition will likely lack the other. In their defense, neither attitude is much encouraged by an American society awash in the ceaseless novelty and programmatic cynicism of advertising and spin, in which the best humor is always dubbed "irreverent," the best art and scholarship are praised for their "transgressive" qualities, and the past is anything that happened more than 20 minutes ago. For them, the words of the American Founders, to say nothing of the words of Hebrew Scripture, seem as remote as the Crab Nebula, and just as irrelevant to the conduct of their lives. Nor should anyone be surprised that this strange, consumption-besotted, endlessly self-parodic milieu has produced the nervous and self-mocking joylessness one sees in so many American young people, who so often seem like aimlessly circling birds, unable to find a place to light. The wonder is that there are any of the other kind left.

The problems of commerce

So where will the next generation of American patriots come from? The particulars of the situation are not terribly encouraging. There is no iron-clad guarantee that there will even be such a generation. The heart of the problem is the well-known fact that the cultivation of patriotic virtue does not come naturally to a commercial society such as the United States. When the self-interested pursuit of material well-being, rather than the inculcation of public-spiritedness, has become the glue of social cohesion and the chief engine of social progress, where can such a society catch a glimpse of broader and longer horizons, or find compelling rationales for sacrificial acts devoted to the common good? Tocqueville showed persuasively how far the principle of "self-interest rightly understood" could go in reproducing many of the salutary effects of virtue. Rather than appealing to an obsolete standard of noble thoughts and character, the principle of "self-interest rightly understood" succeeded by persuading citizens that it was both prudent and useful for them to behave

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in outwardly virtuous ways. But even that principle has its limits, and it reaches those limits at precisely the moment when the utilitarian payoff for virtuous behavior is no longer so plainly evident.

The martial virtues fall first. How can the principle of self-interest serve to persuade a soldier to lay down his life for his country or to risk life and limb by withholding confidential information when he is held prisoner? Or, on a less heroic level, how does this principle command sufficient loyalty from the general populace to fight an extended, costly war, or form affective bonds that will take precedence over self-interest in moments of national crisis? Even the self-restraints entailed by more commonplace virtues such as thrift, modesty, and marital fidelity are likely to weaken when there is no obvious utility in respecting them, and no obvious risk in disdaining them. In any event, the broad spirit of patriotism, which blends the martial virtues with the commonplace ones, cannot thrive without being nourished by moral sources, ones that the principle of self-interest cannot provide. Finding and sustaining those alternative sources turns out to be one of the perennial problems of American society. It is a problem very much facing us in the prosperous present.

Happily complicating the matter, however, is the undeniable fact that the United States has managed to produce more than its share of genuine patriots—warriors and heroes great and small, gallant and unprepossessing, romantic and gritty, aristocratic and plebeian, all united by a willingness to put their lives on the line for their country. How then, in light of the formidable obstacles mentioned above, has the United States managed to bring forth such patriots? And how can it find the means to honor them properly in the present, and—most important of all—produce more of them in the future? The answers to these questions have never been obvious, either to the generation of the Founders or to our own, but a great deal hangs upon the way they are answered, or not answered. Hence it is a fortunate event that Walter Berns, one of our most thoughtful political philosophers, has come forward with a lucid new book, *Making Patriots*,[1] the fruit of his many

[1] University of Chicago Press. 144 pp. $20.00.

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years of reflection on the American polity and society, to address precisely these questions. "Designing a public-spirit curriculum for such a people" is, Berns writes, "no easy task." But few are better qualified to help initiate the process.

American exceptionalism

To begin with, Berns argues, we need to recognize that patriotism in America is an entirely different animal from patriotism in other times and places. The ancient Greek city-state of Sparta, for example, which Berns takes to represent the apex of the classical world's understanding of patriotism, was legendary for its public-spirited citizenry. But it achieved that distinction at far too high a cost, at least according to our standards, by imposing a comprehensive regime of severe, near-totalitarian control upon its people. Every aspect of life, from education to marriage to childrearing to eating, fell under the state's purview. Ruthlessly obliterating any elements of privacy or individuality in its citizen's lives, or any of the institutions that mediated between the state and the individual, Sparta sought to achieve a homogeneous, mobilized, martially virtuous populace, imbued with an overwhelming sense of duty to the collective whole, and rendered invulnerable to the siren songs of self-interest and self-gratification. All private sentiments became displaced onto the state itself, so that self-love was sublimated and absorbed entirely into the love of Sparta. Such discipline made for a mighty and disciplined war machine. But it neglected nearly every other aspect of human potentiality and would be entirely inappropriate as a model of patriotism or patriot-formation for the American republic.

This is true in part because the American polity would emphasize commerce over warmaking, and protection of men's natural rights over enforcement of their social obligations. But it also is true, Berns points out, because the classical model had long before been shattered by the advent of Christianity, which separated the spiritual duties of men from their political ones and the things of God from the things of Caesar. This decisively changed the nature of patriotism, driving a wedge between the private and public virtues, and demoting the latter to a decisively subordinate role. If Sparta had made the cultivation of public virtue and patriotic sentiment the be-

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all and end-all of social existence, then Christianity did something like the opposite, downgrading the sentiment of patriotism and presenting it with an enduring dilemma. Would patriotism become conflated with religious sentiment, and thereby absorbed into the vision of a crusading worldly theocracy? Or would it remain aloof from religious sentiment, and thereby run the risk of becoming the distant junior partner of a gnostic, otherworldly faith?

The American solution, which could not have been arrived at without the clarifying help of centuries of European religious wars, managed to split the difference, with a decisive move in the direction of separation, though also with a healthy expression of generalized Protestant civil religion undergirding and enlivening the whole. It is a settlement that defies easy formulation and is more fragile than many Americans appreciate. Berns overstates matters a bit in asserting baldly that the Founders "consigned [religion] to the private sphere." In fact, that prospect didn't come fully into view until the century just past, and its effects have always been highly controversial. But Berns is right, in the end, to say that the Constitution the Framers devised did not envision the United States government as the custodian of men's souls. That was to be the task of other entities. Instead, the Constitution was designed to free men to engage in the self-interested pursuits of a bourgeois society.

Which brings us back to the central problem: How does a republic that is based upon cupidity and self-seeking make public-spirited patriots? Thomas Jefferson, like Rousseau before him, was himself dubious about the possibility, which was one reason why he preferred the agrarian ideal of a virtuous landowning yeomanry over the Hamiltonian vision of a restless and inventive commercial class of continental-minded men. A farmer, after all, lived a settled life and had a citizen's substantial stake in the land he inhabited and cultivated. But what about the holder of stocks, bonds, and bank notes? He was a man ever on the move, a citizen of no place, a man whose only home was the market.

Yet Jefferson was also principal author of the document that, for Berns, provides the one sure basis for American patriotism: the Declaration of Independence. The key to Ameri-

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can patriotism, in Berns's view, is that it is twofold, entailing not only devotion to one's country but also devotion to the principles upon which that country had been founded and to which it was consecrated. These principles are not peculiar to Americans, but are thought to be universal in scope, grounded self-evidently in human nature. First among these principles are the famous assertions that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, and that governments derive their legitimacy from the consent of the governed and are instituted for the purpose of securing these rights. From these principles may be derived a more generalized commitment to democratic self-government, which Lincoln called government "of the people, by the people and for the people." This is the creed to which Americans assent, Berns argues, and it is out of admiration for these ideals, and not merely out of filial loyalty to "their" country, that American patriots derive their animating sentiments.

The figure of Abraham Lincoln looms especially large for Berns. He is "patriotism's poet," the uncommon common man whose words and personal example offer eloquent testimony to the possibilities of American democracy. Hence Berns twice cites words from Lincoln's 1852 eulogy to Henry Clay as a definitive statement on the shape of American patriotism. Clay, Lincoln said, "loved his country partly because it was his own country, but mostly because it was a free country; and he burned with a zeal for its advancement, because he saw in such, the advancement, prosperity, and glory of human liberty, human right, and human nature." It was this sense of America's mission, as the carrier and leading advocate for universal ideals, and not merely as another nation seeking to preserve its territory or expand its place in the sun, that animated Clay and Lincoln. And, Berns argues, it has animated the generations of American patriots who fought to preserve the Union and to defeat the totalitarian powers of the twentieth century.

Berns does not deny the stains on the national record, particularly the institution of slavery and its aftermath. But he is determined that those failures be estimated properly, as the ex-slave Frederick Douglass himself did, as remediable de-

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fects in an otherwise admirable and promising structure, rather than be exaggerated and used to denigrate the whole. Berns endorses Lincoln's contention that America represents "the last, best hope of earth," with all the enormous responsibilities that that entails. And he concludes by insisting that it is all-important to defend the legitimacy of America's liberal democracy and the ideal it embodies against the armies of its postmodernist, relativist, and multiculturalist detractors. For once this legitimacy is damaged, and once the foundational truths are no longer regarded as self-evident by the citizenry, then the American nation will be uprooted and fatally undermined to the detriment not only of America but of all humanity.

Dangerous abstractions

Berns is himself a member of the generation of patriots, now gradually disappearing from our midst, that fought in the war against Hitler. That poignant fact echoes through his pages, subtly but unmistakably, giving an added measure of authority to his words. He has written a deeply moving book, personal without being the least bit mawkish or confessional and vibrant with the full range of human emotions—pride, reverence, tenderness, and occasional flashes of anger. This is, after all, his country that he is writing about. He manages to convey a keen sense of connection to the American past, a sense that is much more than merely historical. There is a feeling of urgency, too, a concern that the rising generations have not been taught about what they have inherited, about what their inheritance cost—and about those who were willing to pay the price for it. "Ours is not a parochial patriotism," Berns insists, because "it comprises an attachment to principles that are universal." Anything less would be "un-American."

One hopes there will be young readers of Berns's book who will find themselves stirred by such a full-throated and unabashed endorsement of America's sense of heroic mission. But there will be other readers, even ones as admiring as this reviewer, who may want to pause at such words and the argument they embody. For there is a danger in coming to regard America too exclusively as an idea, the carrier of an idea, or

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the custodian of a set of principles, rather than as a real nation that exists in a world of other nations, with all the features and limitations of a nation, including its particular history, institutions, and distinctive national character.

To be sure, Berns is right to stress the twofold character of American patriotism: The patriot loves America partly because it is his own country and partly because of his love for the ideals for which the country stands. The two motives are in tension, but they also are inseparable and mutually indispensable. America is not a class-ridden traditional society or a homogeneous blood-and-soil nation-state, but neither is it a universalistic ideological crusade. What is worrisome and lopsided in Berns's account of American patriotism is the near-exclusive weight he gives to the abstract and ideological dimensions of American patriotism, to the virtual exclusion of all other elements.

Indeed, at one point in his book he unfairly ridicules (and misquotes) a famous toast delivered in 1815 by the heroic American naval officer Stephen Decatur, declaring the words to be unpatriotic, even "un-American," because of their failure to endorse abstract universal principles of political right. The toast goes like this: "Our country! In her intercourse with foreign nations may she always be in the right; but our country, right or wrong!" In his rendering, Berns omits the words "In her intercourse with foreign nations," which changes the meaning of the quote rather dramatically. But even in its truncated form, the quote does not deserve the scorn Berns heaps upon it. For patriotism, like any love, withers and dies if it is not accorded some degree of instinctive assent. Berns's position could be interpreted to be that our country deserves our support only when its motives are demonstrably pure and its course of action demonstrably unassailable, that our loyalty to it is always revocable, that the nation stands every day freshly before the bar of judgment, to be assessed solely on the basis of its consonance that day with the universal principles of political right. This is much too brittle and unstable a foundation for any durable patriotism—particularly, one might add, in a nation's intercourse with foreign nations.

Berns, of course, is not advocating any such thing. But his words inadvertently point to the problem with interpreting

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America exclusively as an idea. Obviously, no decent patriotism can ever be completely unconditional, blindly loyal on all occasions, deaf to the claims of morality. That way lies tyranny and human degradation. But compelling reasons of state do not always translate into readily apprehended principles of universal morality, and there are times when being a patriot means being like a soldier, following leaders who have had to make complex judgments beyond the soldier's ken. Even Berns's beloved Lincoln is vulnerable to the charge that the human rights of slaves and such fundamental rights as habeas corpus were less important to him than the preservation of the Union, that the Emancipation Proclamation was primarily a cynical and calculated war measure, and that only the relentless pressure of events and other men led Lincoln to end slavery. If those charges sound familiar, it is because they are the same charges that two generations of morally indignant historians have hurled at Lincoln, convicting him by reference to a universalistic (and unrealistic and ungenerous) standard very much like the one Berns advocates.

We are family?

So how might one arrive at a more complex understanding of the mixed nature of American patriotism? One might find some insight in an analogy to marriage, an institution in which something very much like Berns's twofold division of motives obtains. The parallels are suggestive. A man is devoted to his wife partly because she is admirable—and partly because she is his. And it is easy to see how, in a marriage, one cannot separate these two things in practice. A man may perhaps initially fall in love with a woman because she is admirable and lovely. But it is an entirely different matter to explain why he stays married and faithful to her, even when he knows full well that she is not always admirable and lovely. Should a man continue to love and honor his wife only if she is *always* admirable? Of course not. We all recognize that only a very shallow and insubstantial love would express itself in this way. Are there not occasions when a good husband honors and defends his wife, even when she may be in the wrong, simply because she is his and he is hers? Is there not a mutual obligation subsisting between them, far more deep-seated than

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any transient wrong? Obviously. Are there times when the strict pursuit of justice in a marriage takes a back seat to the preservation of the union? Yes. Can a happy and healthy marriage endure when justice is *always* subordinated to the preservation of the union? No.

In other words, the nature of the commitment made in a good marriage is a complex blend of motives, ideal and primal, extrinsic and intrinsic, practical and impractical. It would be unthinkable, and in fact somewhat ludicrous, to imagine that one set of motives could exist without the counterbalance of the other. There is merit in a love that is directed toward a person who possesses abundant admirable qualities. But there is even more merit in a love that is able, over time, and within the enclosure of a mutual commitment, to acknowledge and accept—up to a point—what is less than fully admirable, what is all-too-human, about the otherwise admirable other. Where that point is located and when it is reached are questions almost impossible to answer in any general way. Tolstoy, wrong in so many other things, was also wrong in proposing that happy families are always the same. General principles may be helpful, but they always have to be weighed against other considerations.

One might also extend the analogy to encompass other relationships within the family. If a country is like a spouse, it is also like a parent, since it constitutes one of the irreducible sources of one's being. One's gratitude to one's forebears is very much like the gratitude a patriot should feel toward those, like Walter Berns, who fought to preserve their nation. So then: Is it a good thing to admire one's father (and to be an admirable father)? Of course. Should one's love for one's father be conditional upon his always having been an admirable person and having always done admirable things? Of course not. Should one love one's father even when he has behaved shamefully, as a criminal or a traitor? That is more difficult. Perhaps even then, though only up to a point. But then, who is to say? The truth of the matter is buried in the particulars.

Like all analogies, these marital and familial ones break down at some point. Mario Cuomo's famous words notwithstanding, a nation is not a family. Indeed, the analogy becomes problematic when overtaxed precisely because (as Berns

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points out) Americans have never spoken of their country as a "fatherland," in the way so many Europeans spoke of their own nations in the pre-European Union era. In fact, it might be said that America was the country one came to in order to escape from one's father, both literally and figuratively. It was the country where one put aside the heavy lumber of inherited identity and tradition, and was freed to begin again. Hence Berns much prefers G. K. Chesterton's notion that America, far from being a fatherland, is "the only nation in the world that is founded on a creed," and is therefore "a nation with the soul of a church." To be an American, in this view, is not a matter of whose child you are but of what principles you accept. It is a nation of the twice-born, politically and culturally, a nation founded not upon descent but consent.

A creedal nation?

There is profound truth in this, but it is not the whole of the matter. The Chestertonian analogy breaks down too—or more precisely, it tells us more than was intended. Indeed, it goes directly to the heart of what is so troubling about Berns's view of American patriotism. For a church is much more than its creed. The creed is indispensable, as an intellectual guidepost, a check upon heresy, a means of instructing the young, and a handy distillation of church doctrine. Documents like the Westminster Confession are masterpieces of theological clarity and concision. But a church that had only a creed would be no church at all. One need only visit an old churchyard and see the gravestones of several generations of a family clustered together to understand how this is so. All churches, even the most nouveau-Protestant ones, possess a rich storehouse of conscious and unconscious traditions, liturgies, songs, rituals, and customs. Over time these become inseparable in the minds and hearts of the worshipers from the content of their faith. Creeds are useful, but the Biblical and liturgical texts and the sacraments and rituals are not finally reducible to propositional statements; they are not reducible to anything less than themselves. There is a seamless web that unites every piece of church life with every other, for better or worse. This is why any changes in the pattern of church life become fraught with peril: Such changes may seem to disturb

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the bones of the dead and tamper with the very structure of the cosmos.

So a creed can be useful to shake up the musty complacency and cultural stasis that can creep into such a hidebound environment. It may also have defensive uses, as a means of keeping the train from going off the tracks. But it is not the soul of a church or a nation. Or, to put it another way, a living creed is a distillation and codification of beliefs that are grounded elsewhere—embodied in the habits and mores and institutions of the people. The words have to be made flesh and dwell among us. Without such quickening, a creed soon becomes a dead letter.

And for the same reasons, indoctrination into the principles of the Declaration of Independence alone will not make our young Americans into patriots. It is a beginning, but only a beginning. As both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams made clear, the Americans of the Revolutionary generation did not need instruction in what their Declaration declared. Their Declaration was mainly a press release to the world which attempted to put into words what most Americans already believed and embodied in their way of life. For our young people to know about it is, in the end, indispensable. But what is just as needful—perhaps even more so—is a recognition that there can be no meaningful patriotism in a society whose most privileged young people know nothing, remember nothing, respect nothing, cherish nothing, feel responsible for nothing, and are grateful for nothing.

This litany is not meant as a disparagement of the young but of those adults who have abdicated their responsibility for the young's formation, setting them free to be shaped by cable television, shopping malls, Internet chat rooms, and all the other flotsam of our feckless commercial culture. That irresponsibility, I think, is what has produced the conditions that sadden, anger, and worry Walter Berns, as they should all of us. But if no grand national program of ideological revitalization can rebuild what has been eroded, there is still hope for America in the patriotism of those young Jews mentioned earlier who have chosen to swim against the tide by paying homage to their birthright. A second birth does not have to renounce the first, and faithfulness in large things begins with

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faithfulness in smaller ones. The genius of American patriotism resides here just as much as it does in the Declaration of Independence. And if taken seriously, it will do far more to change the way Americans live.

A final image. When Lincoln wondrously invoked the "mystic chords of memory" in his first inaugural address, he envisioned them as the emanations of musical strings, "stretching from every battlefield and patriot grave to every living heart and hearthstone all over this broad land." It is an amazingly rich and well-considered image. We should not miss the fact that the strings are held in place not only by the deeds of warriors at one end but also by the domestic world, the world of family and home, at the other. Gratitude to one's country, however principled, must also draw upon forms of gratitude that are more primary—upon the things that are personal, particular, and singular. The things, in short, that are one's own. Without them, there can be no music, no memory, and no chorus of the Union.

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The transformation of liberalism, 1964 to 2001

THOMAS F. POWERS

We are engaged in a great adventure—as great as that of the last century, when our fathers marched to the western frontier. Our frontier today is of human beings, not of land.

—Lyndon Johnson, Message on the Civil Rights Bill

TODAY, Americans take for granted, at the level of policy and principle, a commitment to fighting racism, sexism, and other forms of unjust discrimination. But the idea of anti-discrimination is in many ways a remarkable discovery in the history of modern democracy. The depth and seriousness of our commitment to this effort, despite its novel and even unprecedented character, is perhaps a large part of the reason we do not probe too deeply in thinking about it. But if we wish to see the full meaning of democratic citizenship in America today, we must become more fully conscious of this new pillar of our political order. Though a term of negative construction, anti-discrimination defines

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the positive meaning of equal citizenship today, and debates about it are at the heart of our civic and moral self-understanding. Above all, we must gain a more accurate view of the relation between anti-discrimination and America's liberal democratic tradition.

For very good reasons, Americans are devoted both to the liberal political framework of politics and to a policy of fighting discrimination. But in ways that we do not adequately appreciate, anti-discrimination transforms and at points even breaks with the liberal tradition. Thus American politics today orients itself by two competing moral and political polestars—anti-discrimination and liberalism—and this explains a great deal of the confusion surrounding our political debate on a number of divisive issues.

Is it possible that one innovation in public policy—the commitment to overcoming discrimination in the private as well as the public sphere—could have had such a dramatic impact on the contours of American democratic life? Certainly, the standard interpretation holds the fight against discrimination to be no more than the culmination of liberal principle, not a deviation from it. Most would agree with Daniel Patrick Moynihan's view that the civil rights revolution of the 1960s did nothing more than "at last redeem the full promise of the Declaration of Independence." The leading historian of the civil rights era, Hugh Davis Graham, maintains that the 1964 Civil Rights Act enshrines only "classic liberalism's core command against discrimination." In current debates, defenders of liberalism look for the cause of troubles not in the civil rights movement and its great political achievement but in seemingly alien intellectual developments or other social trends.

Clearly, something new and different is at work reshaping the basic logic of American politics. Despite its victory in the Cold War, the liberal tradition in America is under renewed attack in a culture war. Multiculturalists, Afrocentrists, radical feminists, postmodern advocates of a new "politics of difference," and a host of other activists (gay-positive, ethnic, linguistic, differently abled) have created a new political dynamic that has largely supplanted struggles that used to take place along class lines. In the current debate, even liberalism's highest principle—the commitment to free speech—is not im-

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mune to challenge.

To begin to see anti-discrimination more clearly, in all its power and importance, it is necessary to examine it from a number of different vantage points. First, the history of anti-discrimination's rise and ultimate victory makes clear the ways in which it was a correction to a blind-spot in the liberal framework, a remedy necessarily going beyond the confines of traditional liberalism. Second, and perhaps most important, anti-discrimination challenges the liberal understanding of the relationship between politics and morality. Against the liberal inclination, anti-discrimination makes the legislation of morality an open and explicit part of American politics, shaping a new ideal of democratic citizenship. Finally, in the broad outlines of our "group politics," the logic of anti-discrimination works itself out in ways that differ markedly from traditional liberal pluralism.

The limits of liberalism

The rise of anti-discrimination policy in America is, to a disturbing degree, a history of struggle *against* liberal categories and principles. While it cannot be denied that the civil rights struggle was inspired by important liberal principles, at the same time, liberal principles were also used, and for a century used more effectively, by defenders of the old order. One could well argue that in this case liberal principles were distorted and abused for fundamentally illiberal ends. But in order to understand anti-discrimination's final result and its relation to liberalism, it is necessary to recognize that liberalism itself is to some degree implicated in the unjust treatment of blacks in America from 1865 to 1964. The case of black Americans is central to the story of anti-discrimination's initial emergence. While many other groups—especially women, the elderly, the disabled, and gays and lesbians—have become important to the politics of anti-discrimination, it was the extreme nature of white racism, cloaked in the garb of liberal principle, and the successful struggle of blacks against it, that shaped the legal and political outcome with which we are concerned.

Of course, in important and obvious ways, anti-discrimination policy does grow out of liberalism. Liberal toleration, and

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the guarantee of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments of "non-discrimination" in the "public" sphere, clearly sets the stage for contemporary anti-discrimination policy. But the traditional liberal ideal of *non-discrimination* in the *public* sphere is not the same as *anti-discrimination* in the *public* and *private* spheres. The shift to a policy of anti-discrimination was a response to a failing of the traditional liberal framework at least as much as it was indebted to that framework.

The liberal guarantee of equal citizenship, as embodied in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, was a limited guarantee, extending only to the public realm: "due process of law," "equal protection of the laws," and the "right of citizens ... to vote." In the course of events, this meant that the U.S. Constitution did nothing to counteract race discrimination in the private sphere. This indeed became the explicit basis of public policy in 1883 in the *Civil Rights Cases*, when the Supreme Court struck down the Civil Rights Act of 1875, the first federal anti-discrimination effort extending to the private sphere and the last federal civil rights law until 1957. "It would be running the slavery argument into the ground," said the Court, "to make it apply to every act of discrimination which a person may see fit to make as to the guests he will entertain, or as to the people he will take into his coach or cab or car, or admit to his concert or theatre, or deal with in other matters of intercourse or business." The deepest meaning of what became known as the "state action" doctrine was stated with brutal clarity by Justice Joseph P. Bradley: So long as "not sanctioned in some way by the State, or not done under State authority," the "wrongful act of an individual ... is simply a private wrong."

What happened next exposed a deep problem in the liberal view of political life. By permitting private discrimination, the liberal state sanctioned and effectively protected it, giving free reign to the prejudices of the overwhelming white majority. It is no mystery then, that in *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896), the Supreme Court went on to formulate its infamous interpretation of the equal-citizenship principle as permitting "separate but equal" treatment of blacks and whites, that is, segregation even in the public sphere. Once this point was passed, the door was open to the effective denial of basic citizenship

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rights to blacks by states—in voting, in the courts, and in other important areas of public life.

In this case, liberal principle was clearly distorted, but the crucial legal and political preparation for this distortion was the decision to permit private discrimination, a stance to which liberal theory, with its quintessential divide between public and private, and its vow to protect the latter from the former, readily lends itself. But by assuming that private prejudices (even if they are "private wrongs," as Justice Bradley put it) are no concern of the state, American liberalism ignored basic facts of social and political life: Taking no stand on the prejudices and prejudiced actions of the majority had tremendous social and political consequences for the black minority. This was a fundamental blind-spot in liberal theory that white racism was able to exploit.

Americans will not soon forget what this earlier failing meant. The outcome—widespread racial discrimination and segregation in everything from the armed forces, public schools, and the halls of justice to private businesses, universities, and churches (even cemeteries)—was held by so many to be unjust that many Americans began to call into question the foundations of the political framework that permitted it. The pre-1964 policy of non-discrimination in the public sphere was manifestly inadequate—it didn't stop racism in the private sphere and, especially in the South, it didn't even live up to its own more modest standard of equal protection in the public realm. Liberal moral sentiment was surely an important cause of disgust with racism in America and of opposition to the grossest distortions of liberalism. But to overcome racism it would not be enough to restore the traditional liberal standard of equal citizenship, even by rejecting the hypocrisy of "separate but equal," the great achievement of *Brown v. Board of Education*. Only a policy that went beyond the limits of liberalism could hope to solve the problem of racism in America.

The anti-discrimination revolution

It is to 1964 and to the Civil Rights Act—and not to 1954 and *Brown*—that we must turn for the more fundamental development in American civil rights policy. It is here that the United States first tried to uproot discrimination and preju-

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dice completely and at its source, in the private sphere. The shift from a policy of non-discrimination in the public sphere to one adding anti-discrimination in the private sphere may seem subtle, but in fact, in the context of American liberalism, it amounts to a fundamental and unprecedented reorientation. Designed to solve the great difficulty in liberal theory and practice which had been exposed by the injustices done to blacks, anti-discrimination introduced a new spirit of democratic politics that is still unfolding and is still not yet fully appreciated or understood.

The radical character of the basic development was noted, if only briefly, at the moment of transition. In 1963, Robert Bork, who has since changed his mind, stated the issue forcefully in the *New Republic*: "The principle of [anti-discrimination] legislation is that if I find your behavior ugly by my standards, moral or aesthetic, and if you prove stubborn about adopting my view of the situation, I am justified in having the state coerce you into more righteous paths. That is itself a principle of unsurpassed ugliness." This was roughly the classic liberal understanding, voiced at the time by many conservatives and a central feature in Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential campaign (like Bork, Goldwater subsequently changed his mind). But the voice of liberal opposition to anti-discrimination has long been silent. Today, anti-discrimination is universally accepted by all but the marginal fringe (politically irrelevant, unelected and unelectable)—a remarkable development considering its impact and its once controversial character. The same cannot be said, for example, of even the most basic of the New Deal's achievements, whose libertarian critics still get a respectable public hearing. Today, anyone invoking liberal principle to oppose anti-discrimination policy in the private sphere is dismissed as advocating racism or other unjust forms of discrimination.

But even anti-discrimination's advocates and supporters were not entirely certain that what they were doing was consistent with cherished liberal principles and practices. The view of the early civil rights leaders, expressed by no less a personage than Frederick Douglass, followed the conventionally liberal outline of the issues, seeking nothing more than equality for blacks in the public sphere: "The question is not can there be

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social equality. That does not exist anywhere." Even Martin Luther King, Jr., in his "I Have A Dream" speech, demanded only that America respect the "citizenship rights" of blacks. A certain hesitation or uncertainty is indeed memorialized in the 1964 Act itself, which has not one but two different constitutional justifications (the Democrats' "commerce clause" and the Republicans' "state action") written into the law to reassure the Supreme Court and anyone else who might think that the measure had too far exceeded the strictures of traditional liberalism.

Regardless of how important the idea of anti-discrimination has since become, it might never have come into existence but for a combination of extraordinary circumstances. Anti-discrimination measures would almost certainly never have been deemed necessary if not for the anomalous situation of blacks and the legacy of slavery in America. Moreover, anti-discrimination for blacks would probably not have become policy but for the experience of America's struggles against fascism and communism. Defining themselves against the horrors of Nazism and the Holocaust, Americans were forced to take their own liberalism more seriously. The treatment of blacks in the United States not only showed itself to be a glaring hypocrisy but also threatened to deprive Americans of the nobility of their heroic efforts in World War II. In the Cold War as well, America's liberal principles were both emphasized and scrutinized before the world in a way that made the unjust treatment of blacks especially troubling. None of this is meant to take away from the remarkable efforts of black Americans, the quiet dignity of their struggle and the brilliance of their legal and political strategy; it is only to call attention to the special character of the circumstances leading up to their ultimate success.

The anti-discrimination regime

That anti-discrimination is an attempt to overcome certain limitations of liberal politics becomes clear in the story of its emergence. But before turning directly to the most important lines of tension between liberalism and anti-discrimination, it is useful to state the basic outlines of anti-discrimination policy and its most immediate impact.

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Leaving aside for the moment the question of its effect on the liberal political framework, the bare legal and institutional efforts associated with anti-discrimination must be said to be ambitious and far-reaching. In addition to enforcing the traditional promise of non-discrimination in the public sphere, anti-discrimination was quickly extended to every important area of private or "social" life. The 1964 Act prohibited discrimination in the workplace, labor unions, and hotels, restaurants, and other such "public accommodations." Within a decade, the policy was extended even further, to cover discrimination in the sale and rental of private housing as well as in banking and lending and membership in private clubs and associations (including to a limited degree religious associations). Crucial to the success of these efforts were special institutions of the state dedicated solely to enforcing a variety of anti-discrimination laws and programs. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and the Civil Rights Commission, along with individual anti-discrimination programs in each of the major departments of the federal government (all imitated at the state and local levels), give real teeth to the new order. The efforts of the state, already considerable, have also been copied and further amplified by similar efforts in the private sector. It is a sign of the changes that have taken place that today we accept without question the scrutiny of a host of equal-opportunity or "equity" officers who enforce the new standard at every level of government, in every military unit, and in every university and major corporation in our society.

Other more controversial policies that critics claim extend beyond mere anti-discrimination—affirmative action, busing, group representation, multicultural education, speech codes, the criminalization of hate—are in fact only extensions of the impulse to fight discrimination. Affirmative action, busing, and group representation are explained as remedies for past discrimination or as measures to protect against discrimination in the future. Multicultural education is above all a new civic education to teach the basic moral and political lessons of anti-discrimination to our children. The restriction of "hate speech" takes the regulation of the private sphere in the name of anti-discrimination to its logical conclusion. Criminalizing discriminatory motives symbolizes our resolve to fight discrimi-

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nation with the greatest sanction we have, the criminal law. All of these policies can be considered aspects of a broader anti-discrimination project.

Beyond the far-ranging policy innovations advanced to combat discrimination is a new kind of "group" politics that has arisen to take advantage of them. Originally designed to deal with one specific case—the extraordinary situation of black Americans—anti-discrimination policy was quickly extended to a diverse array of groups that could make a persuasive claim for its protection. Almost from the very start, religious groups, ethnic minorities, and women were all held to merit anti-discrimination protections. In 1968, "language minorities" were added to the list, and in 1973 and 1975, so were the disabled and the elderly. Since then, everything from one's financial status and receipt of public assistance to one's criminal record and drug or alcohol dependency have been made grounds for protection under the anti-discrimination umbrella. The gay-rights movement is only the latest effort to gain the sanction of the new framework. The legal, financial, and moral incentives put in place by anti-discrimination have spawned new "social movements" (concerning which there is a new field of social science) to take advantage of them.

Putting morality and politics back together

The ambitious efforts of the state required by anti-discrimination, and the changes in political participation associated with them, are impressive in their own right. But it is in its relation with liberalism that anti-discrimination works its deepest and most profound transformation. We are witnessing a reconfiguration of our democracy's overarching justificatory political framework—or "metanarrative," to use the more fashionable term—from a more to a less clearly liberal structure. Anti-discrimination brings about a change at the level of our constitution, in every sense of the word.

Anti-discrimination alters the American liberal order above all in its tendency to change the way we think about the relationship between politics and morality. Liberal democracy is the only political system in history in which "legislating morality" is said to be the height of immorality. With anti-discrimination, however, legislating morality once again be-

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comes the rule. What citizens feel they can now expect or demand from politics and from their fellows has shifted in a fundamental way.

There are few things more important to the traditional liberal understanding than the view that morality and politics should be kept separate. Without this principle, freedom of speech, religious toleration, the separation of church and state, liberal individualism, and the idea of limited government all lose their coherence. The core of liberty is the liberty to judge for oneself. The view that law regulates "action" but not "opinion"—leaving the mind ever free—is at the very center of the liberal distinction between public and private. Traditional liberalism seeks to lower the stakes of politics by removing contentious moral (and religious) opinion to the private sphere. Political life thereby becomes a less morally charged matter of presiding over competition among various "interest groups," whose squabbling is amenable to compromise. People are more likely to fight if politics concerns itself with God, fundamental justice, the greatest good, or the noble; the history of liberal democracy seems to prove that they can be made content with bargaining for their piece of the pie. The spirit—and remarkable achievement—of liberal politics is well summarized in Jefferson's formulation: "It does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no gods. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg."

Anti-discrimination directly challenges this important element of the liberal understanding of political life. One advocate of multicultural education, Christine Bennett, puts the matter forcefully: "Those who would equate a stand against racism with preaching values can be told that it is un-American and anti-human to be racist." With anti-discrimination, the open and explicit legislation of morality becomes necessary for several related reasons. Because actions are not easily regulated unless opinions are "educated," racist or sexist thought becomes a concern of the state. Where traditional liberalism insists upon toleration, a realizable but less-than-lofty goal, anti-discrimination calls for something more. We tolerate those whom we neither like nor respect. Yet today this seems too close to "discrimination" for comfort; anti-discrimination insists upon a more exacting standard of treatment among citi-

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zens. Now our politics goes farther, making what individuals *think* about one another an explicit concern of public policy. Whether my neighbor believes in twenty gods or no god is one thing, whether he or she is a racist, sexist, or homophobe is quite another. The anti-discrimination effort must therefore be concerned to some extent with the intimate, interpersonal relations among citizens (and because anti-discrimination extends to relations between the sexes, this can go very far indeed). Ordering the private relations of citizens inescapably becomes a matter of justice and morality.

But Americans' reluctance to embrace such a view runs deep. Even Martin Luther King, Jr. was apologetic when the issue was raised: "Now, people say, 'You can't legislate morals.' Well that may be true. Even though morality may not be legislated, behavior can be regulated." But if King, perhaps for tactical reasons, did not want to draw attention to the revolution underway, Paul Freund, who wrote the Kennedy administration's brief on the constitutionality of the 1964 Act, was more direct: "Is the role of law then simply an amoral manipulation of behavior? Certainly not, because the moral quality of law is itself a force toward compliance and the change of attitudes."

This is not to deny that liberalism depends upon and promotes a specific (liberal) morality. Certainly, liberalism asserts the moral superiority of the social contract and politics based on consent. And it requires thoroughly liberal citizens, who will obey the dictates of the social contract willingly, even when it is not to their own immediate advantage. Moreover, liberalism is associated with a particular way of life, the life of a commercial, technologically educated middle class. It is even perhaps legitimate to speak of liberal "virtues," as such liberal political theorists as William Galston have in recent years. Whether these are the personal virtues of Locke's "rational and industrious" individuals or the social contractarian virtues of obedience to law, civility, toleration, and self-restraint, it is certainly true that liberalism is associated with a specific moral spirit.

But it is also true that liberalism goes to great lengths, above all in the name of a "liberty" that is not said to entail any one specific form of "virtue," to hide the fact that it

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imposes a specific moral outlook on its citizens. Just how far the anti-moralistic tendency of liberalism may go is well-captured in Alan Wolfe's recent book *Moral Freedom*, which argues that the "final freedom" of modern societies is precisely the freedom of individuals to "decide what is right and wrong." This is not necessarily to say that the liberal view of the relationship between politics and morality is incoherent, so much as it is to say that it is ambiguous.

In the new struggle to redefine the relationship between morality and politics, the conflict between anti-discrimination and freedom of speech is visible to everyone. While the Supreme Court has thus far resisted hate-speech ordinances, anti-harassment laws that pass constitutional muster quite explicitly prohibit racist and sexist speech in the workplace. The controversy over speech codes on college campuses is not yet settled to anyone's satisfaction. Somewhat less noted, largely because it is more popular politically, is the widespread enactment of hate-crime laws, which punish "hateful intent" with special penalties. Perhaps paradoxically, the challenge to free speech and thought in the name of anti-discrimination has coincided with a radicalization of the Supreme Court's free-speech jurisprudence over the past 50 years. Yet the fight against racism, sexism, and other forms of unjust discrimination is for the vast majority of Americans at least as inspiring as freedom of speech. Certainly, there is anxiety about "political correctness," a sign of the tension between these twin peaks of our moral order. But if thought and speech may be regulated in the fight against discrimination, what is to stop their regulation in the name of other moral and political concerns? Where is that realm of private life, of individual liberty, that is sacrosanct?

According to the standard view, anti-discrimination's encroachment upon the "private" sphere only continues the basic development of the New Deal regulatory welfare state—which would mean that what anti-discrimination achieves is old news. But this misses the distinctive character of what the anti-discrimination regime must now "regulate." Loosely, liberal democracy may be understood in terms of three categories of fundamental rights or liberties: 1) basic social-contract rights (consent, representation and voting, the rule of law,

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institutional "checks and balances," protections against police and judicial abuses); 2) freedom of conscience (religion and speech); and 3) freedom in the marketplace (contract and property rights). The New Deal touched only the last of these. Anti-discrimination likewise intrudes into the marketplace, and indeed goes much farther than the New Deal in regulating employer-employee relations and other arenas of decision making by private businesses. But more importantly, anti-discrimination also challenges the second pillar of the liberal edifice, the foundation of the loftiest claims of American democracy. By pressing at this point, on the freedom of conscience, anti-discrimination presents a truly revolutionary challenge.

While anti-discrimination's explicit moralization of politics raises questions from the perspective of traditional liberalism, this new public emphasis on ethical matters also helps to explain much of the appeal of the new dispensation, even to those who are not themselves clearly protected under it. By asking citizens to be more attentive to their treatment of others, anti-discrimination puts forward a more demanding standard of citizenship and may thus seem to ennoble our public life in ways that liberalism cannot. In contrast with the liberal demand that we leave one another alone, anti-discrimination provides a more prominent place for justice in our lives, offering new opportunities for sacrifice. Such considerations help to make sense of Richard Rorty's claim that the civil rights movement was "the great, inspiring moral event of our lifetime, the moment at which our country showed that it was capable of moral progress and of a national moral identity"—a view that many would embrace, and not just on the Left.

At the same time, however, anti-discrimination seems not to tax us too much, requiring only the bending of our minds and not our pocketbooks. While anti-discrimination insists upon "respect," it does not demand outright material equality, making it possible for Americans to feel ennobled without having to abandon the individualism and competitive acquisitiveness they take from traditional liberalism. Complaints about affirmative action, a policy with a more obvious material impact, but not about anti-discrimination, are well explained by this perspective.

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The moral revolution

The meaning of anti-discrimination's remoralization of politics may also be stated in terms of the content of the morality it promotes. That anti-discrimination is associated with a significant alteration in the outlines of our moral categories suggests the depth of the change it has achieved.

The claims of anti-discrimination have long been framed in negative terms, in opposition to harms that were considered fundamental injustices. But anti-discrimination can also express positive demands, specific arguments for justice. Distressed groups state their claims generally or universally in an appeal to the broader political community. They express a new understanding of American democracy—an anti-discrimination democracy in which whatever is racist or sexist now defines what is "undemocratic." Similarly, a new view of the common good and of the idea of representation has emerged, following out a new logic of "inclusiveness."

Above all, and what is most distinctive about its moral spirit, anti-discrimination makes questions of dignity, worth, and status a central concern of our political life. Anti-discrimination is partly about money and jobs, but it is mainly about respect. The harm of segregation, for example, relates primarily to matters of honor or status—the insult associated with having to attend racially separated schools or having to sit at the back of the bus. Race discrimination was, as President Kennedy put it, "an arbitrary indignity that no American in 1963 should have to endure." The Supreme Court's judicial scrutiny of discrimination is limited precisely to cases of "invidious"—insulting—discrimination. Questions of insult, honor, status, dignity, and worth are manifestly questions of justice, and anti-discrimination makes these the explicit subject matter of our public life. According to anti-discrimination, the interpersonal relations of Americans are now to be governed by this more demanding standard of "respect," replacing liberalism's less lofty (but also more readily attainable) standard of "toleration."

Stated more positively, the new concern with recognition is said to be grounded in our "identity." The moral impulse of anti-discrimination, deeming as unjust the insult and indignity of discrimination, must presume some good which is frus-

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trated by discrimination. Why not insult others? Why respect others? In the name of what do we insist that we be respected and not insulted? The answer cannot refer to some universal moral status shared by all human beings alike, as in Lockean natural right or Kantian human dignity; guaranteeing this would not ensure that we respect individuals as members of particular groups. But something must be posited as justifying anti-discrimination's demands for equal recognition. And identity—simply "who" we are in our particularity—is what has emerged in the public consciousness to provide the necessary logical basis of such claims. Identity is the "good" called into being by anti-discriminatory justice. But identity is not liberty and, indeed, it is a great question whether the "politics of liberty" and the "politics of identity" are not related to one another in terms of a basic antagonism.

Anti-discrimination's moral spirit is also characterized by a shift toward a new kind of egalitarianism. Though less radical than the socialist class-based egalitarianism of old, the new standard of equality is taken much more seriously in America than any socialist ideal ever was. Beginning from the new concern with recognition or status, this partial egalitarianism goes beyond traditional liberal arguments for equal "opportunity" without necessarily embracing equal "results," arriving at what multicultural education advocate James Banks terms a claim to "equal status situations" for different groups. Granting groups anti-discrimination protection asserts general claims of the equal dignity of blacks and whites, men and women, able and disabled, young and old, and the like. Because anti-discrimination is extended to so many different attributes of persons, it becomes less and less possible to defend *any* claim of inequality among human beings. Reworking American life according to this new standard has myriad implications: Everything from the place of women in the military to the meaning of "merit" to the contributions of different groups in American history must be considered anew.

Consistent with its openly moral stance, and with its origins in resistance to injustice, anti-discrimination is more vigorous than liberalism in its opposition to prejudice. This is clear in the punitive aspects of the effort, expressed legally in the recent criminalization of hate. Similarly, anti-discrimina-

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tion encourages members of groups that are likely to suffer unjust discrimination to be more sensitive to these injustices and slights. Because the struggle is thought to be for justice, the indefinite politicization of anti-discrimination's beneficiaries and potential beneficiaries seems inescapable. But all of this is in tension with traditional liberalism's emphasis on the virtue of civility and its efforts to minimize political conflict.

The importance of morality to anti-discrimination is evident in multicultural education, an effort which began in the 1970s as a direct outgrowth of the civil rights movement. In the words of multicultural education advocate Sonia Nieto, "antiracism, and anti-discrimination in general, is at the very core of a multicultural perspective." Multiculturalism rethinks American education, as James Banks puts it, "through the eyes of the vanquished, since students now study it primarily from the viewpoint of the victors." As multicultural education has become more sophisticated, its adherents increasingly understand it to be a kind of civic education. To cite Banks again, multicultural education is above all an "equity pedagogy," one that "can help us live together in a civic moral community." That the United States is thought to need a new civic education, an education that no longer focuses on the principles of *liberal* democracy, is a telling sign.

These changes in our moral order illustrate anti-discrimination's basic goal. By seeking to reconfigure citizens' interpersonal relations according to a logic of equal recognition, anti-discrimination expresses a novel form of the democratic impulse to equality, one not sought or even imagined by democratic theorists until it was already realized in practice. In principle, the idea is perhaps less ambitious than the attempt to achieve material equality through the abolition of private property. But, unlike communism, the attempt to achieve equality of opinion through the abolition of prejudice and discrimination is better positioned to survive resistance. Because anti-discrimination deals above all with the realm of the mind and the public articulation of thoughts, its consequences are less clear than in the case of corresponding efforts to achieve equality in the material realm. What democracy could not achieve in terms of wealth it can at least perpetually hope to achieve in the minds of democratic citizens. But the goal of

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overcoming through politics prejudice, group-based vanity, and the human tendency to judge others as worse than oneself is ambitious, to say the least. Liberalism surely never aimed this far.

The new pluralism

Just as anti-discrimination transforms the American mind, so it reshapes the broad contours of American pluralism, challenging many key features of traditional liberal democratic politics. The political logic of anti-discrimination provides a new definition of the group, gives groups incentives to make new kinds of demands, and reorders the relation between these groups and their members, the state, and other groups. The explicit moralization of politics that is anti-discrimination's trademark is evident here as it is elsewhere. In its novel pluralism, the tension between anti-discrimination and liberalism is once again clear: A more conflict-ridden form of group politics, one that champions demands made in the name of a new standard of justice, competes with one that traditionally emphasized the peaceful pursuit of mere "interests."

Traditional liberal group politics sought always to limit, defang, and even to undermine the power of groups. In Madison's famous argument in *Federalist* 10, groups were understood to be "factions," the most unsettling danger to republican self-government. By privatizing them and pitting them against one another, in a framework that tended to treat them as selfish and hence somewhat dubious interest groups, liberalism championed the rights of individuals, on the one hand, and the power of the state, on the other, over the claims of groups. Liberalism went far to ensure that even religious groups, which surely make distinctive moral claims of their own, would be strictly limited in their ability to press their claims in the public arena.

Anti-discrimination policy calls for an approach that differs markedly at every point. Where liberal individualism understands groups as mere "associations" of individuals who voluntarily join or do not, the politics of anti-discrimination emphasizes "ascriptive" groups—groups whose members, given the facts of birth and the like, have no choice in the matter. But the more important defining element of what might be

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termed "anti-discrimination groups" is the fact that their members tend to suffer or have suffered in the past from the injustice of discrimination. Anti-discrimination groups are "victim" groups, and thus, unlike those of traditional liberal interest groups, the claims they make are morally charged. The result is a politics not of interest-group competition and toleration but of identity protection and group-based recognition. The state, moreover, cannot even attempt to be "neutral" among groups but must be actively engaged on the behalf of some against others. Finally, under this new dispensation, groups view one another differently, not as rivals to be tolerated but either as friends or enemies. The "Rainbow Coalition" is precisely such a coalition of anti-discrimination groups organized for morally charged conflict with other groups.

The overall result of anti-discrimination is to politicize members of groups, to make them more aware of their existence as group members, to make them more sensitive to the possibility that others may be harming or slighting them, and to provide them with justifications and incentives for using the state to assert their claims against others. The characteristic mode of such groups, when they try to influence policy, is mass public protest and broad, rights-based challenges in the courts—very different from the interest group "lobbying" of old. That this politicization has occurred is evident above all in the emergence of new groups and social movements that were not self-conscious or politically organized prior to the 1964 Act. The wide array of groups now covered by anti-discrimination (racial and ethnic minorities, women, religious groups, the elderly, the disabled, etc.) extends to the overwhelming majority of Americans.

The problem is not so much outright group conflict (though this possibility should not be dismissed lightly) as it is an inescapable dynamic of recrimination and mistrust sustained by the anti-discrimination framework. Wendy Brown, an insightful postmodernist political scientist, states the general case with useful clarity: "Politicized identity ... enunciates itself, makes claims for itself, only by entrenching, restating, dramatizing, and inscribing its pain in politics and can hold out no future—for itself or others—that triumphs over this pain." The liberal discourse of toleration has been replaced by one

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of accusation, suspicion, and heightened sensitivity. It is telling that "integration," once the central goal of civil rights policy in America, is almost never spoken of today. For the moment, the new pattern of group politics coexists uneasily alongside the traditional liberal approach, with its emphasis on peace and toleration. But it seems safe to say that the predominance of the former will contribute to the steady erosion of the latter.

To see the difficulties of this state of affairs, it is useful to imagine the politics of religion being entirely taken over by the anti-discrimination framework. It would be necessary to identify more carefully the areas of religious discrimination in American life and to become more sensitive to various insults toward both religious groups and the nonreligious. This would be a divisive and acrimonious process. Are there inequalities among religions or between the religious and nonreligious? How many university professors are practicing Catholics or fundamentalist Protestants as compared with their proportion in the rest of society? Does the science curriculum show adequate "recognition" of religious explanations of the world? Should school prayer be permitted as a matter not of "free expression" but of "respect"?

Already the politics of religion has begun to move in this direction. Religion has been from the very start a protected category under anti-discrimination law. In 1993, the EEOC updated its guidelines to deal with an increasing number of religious discrimination and harassment cases being brought before it, and this trend continues. Advocates of religion themselves increasingly prefer the language of anti-discrimination to the language of the separation of church and state, as in President George W. Bush's famous complaint that the religious are the only people whom it is safe to discriminate against in the United States today. If religion is to make a full return to the public sphere, it will in all likelihood be in this anti-discrimination form.

Anti-discrimination is strong medicine that works well in certain extreme situations of deep and long-standing conflict. The question is whether it can or should serve as the basis of a country's intergroup relations taken as a whole.

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Misinterpreting anti-discrimination

If our commitment to anti-discrimination policies is in fact the cause of such a broad transformation of American democracy, why is this not generally admitted or recognized? Only a few radical partisans—like Richard Epstein, who calls for the repeal of the 1964 Act in the name of liberty, or Constitutional lawyer Andrew Koppelman, who openly advocates sacrificing liberty in the name of anti-discriminatory justice—articulate the issue this way.

That we do not see our situation in terms of this simple framework (liberalism vs. anti-discrimination) is partly explained by the outline of the contemporary civil rights debate. While the basic idea of anti-discrimination is almost universally accepted, other related debates are more polarized and tend to overshadow the question of anti-discrimination's place in our politics. Hate-speech codes are resisted in the name of free speech; group representation is rejected in the name of individual rights; affirmative action is opposed in the name of merit and equal opportunity. The general outline of these debates can thus appear to be one between defenders of various elements of traditional liberalism against proponents of a new radical politics of difference or "group rights." But such a view of current controversies abstracts from the pivotal intermediary role of anti-discrimination, to which both sides in fact agree, and makes less clear the revolutionary impact of anti-discrimination on its own. Indeed, to the extent that the more radical policies are really nothing more than an extension of anti-discrimination's basic logic, the more heated debates over them should serve as a pointer back to anti-discrimination, and as a series of interrelated struggles to define its meaning.

Furthermore, anti-discrimination is typically equated with "equality of opportunity," an uncontroversial liberal principle. But this is misleading. Anti-discrimination is the effort *beyond* equality of opportunity that is required because, in a world of private prejudices, equality of opportunity is not self-enforcing. The most far-reaching aim of anti-discrimination is not merely the promotion of opportunity but the elimination of certain forms of private insult.

The true effects of anti-discrimination in American life are further obscured or distorted by two common misinterpreta-

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tions of the current scene, one from the Right and one from the Left. Conservatives, reluctant to face the possibility that the transformation of American politics is rooted in the American political order itself, a result of the introduction of the anti-discrimination principle into the American political system, instead blame many of the developments they find unsettling on intellectual trends. The leading candidate for the role of illiberal villain is, of course, postmodernism. But while there is much (and increasing) overlap between postmodernist theory and the political aspirations of anti-discrimination groups, it is a mistake to explain American civil rights politics by way of this intellectual history. The civil rights movement in America owed nothing to postmodernism or any philosophical school like it. It may well happen that some mix of postmodernism and anti-discrimination will become to the twenty-first century what Marxism was to the twentieth, but if that occurs, it is politics that will drive the train. There is something to Richard Rorty's complaint, relating to contemporary debates about political correctness, that, "until conservatives stop talking about philosophic principles ... they will not contribute much to American public life."

Meanwhile, the Left misinterprets the changes we see around us by attributing them to a cultural, rather than political, revolution. Anti-discrimination policy is held to be of much less importance than the ground-up efforts of blacks and other groups, including women, gays and lesbians, the disabled and the elderly. (This "sociological" interpretation is also a central prejudice of contemporary social science, which rejects an earlier emphasis on politics or "the state" as an important independent cause.) But such an interpretation is blinded by populist mythology. The struggle of black Americans was truly decisive in the rise of anti-discrimination. While the existence of other victim groups preceded anti-discrimination policy, they only became politically self-conscious and publicly engaged groups by way of the possibilities that the new political framework offered them. It is necessary to consider politics as a formal cause of social life in order to fully appreciate what has taken place.

But the deepest explanation of our lack of attention to the anti-discrimination revolution is to be found in the hopes and

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fears of both the Left and Right. The Left, demanding even more extensive reforms, refuses to concede that anything dramatic has been achieved through anti-discrimination policy. Anti-discrimination policy proves not that America is an astonishingly anti-racist, anti-sexist nation but instead that it continues to fall woefully short of the mark. The Right, on the other hand, wishes to believe that American liberalism is essentially unchanged by the new commitment to anti-discrimination. Locating the cause of trouble elsewhere, in foreign ideas or fringe radical groups, permits conservatives to minimize the difficulty. The Left's blindness is that of moral zeal, the Right's is that of denial. In the end, it is easy for all parties to embrace some version of the view that, since our nation is somehow liberal, and since we endorse anti-discrimination, these two must somehow go together.

Our "identity crisis"

Today, we are torn between the requirements of anti-discrimination and important elements of the liberal tradition. Since both speak in general and often universalistic terms, what is at stake in the conflict between them is nothing less than the ultimate self-understanding of American democracy. The choice between the supremacy of liberty and the justice of anti-discrimination is a difficult one to make. America is in the midst of an "identity crisis," and no obvious or easy way out presents itself.

Certainly, anti-discrimination is here to stay. The commitment to fighting racism, sexism, and other forms of unjust discrimination seems beyond questioning, the new moral polestar of the political order. In addition, the potential anti-discrimination coalition includes the overwhelming majority of the population. Our most urgent need, then, is to understand the character of the commitment to anti-discrimination, its implications, its limits, and its relations to traditional liberalism.

As a policy designed to address the injustices suffered by black Americans, anti-discrimination seems to be the least that justice demands. But as the basis of a new understanding of American democracy, it poses many problems. The current

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debate pits blacks against whites, men against women, homosexuals against heterosexuals, and so on. We would argue along more productive lines, with a clearer view of all that is at stake, if the debate were recast as one between liberal democracy and anti-discrimination democracy. The claim that anti-discrimination is at odds with essential elements of liberalism must be unsettling to any defender of liberalism today. Nevertheless, the best defense of America's liberal democracy will be the most clear-sighted.

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Jane Addams and the social claim

JEAN BETHKE ELSHTAIN

MOST Americans of middle age or older have heard of Jane Addams. Didn't she have something to do with immigrants and social work? "She was a socialist, right?" queried an academic friend when I told her I was at long last writing my "Jane Addams book." This vague sense of familiarity, absent any specific knowledge of who she was or what she did, is understandable. Not only do Americans study far less history now than they once did, but Jane Addams fell from public consciousness rather quickly following her death on May 21, 1935, at the age of 74. Statues of her never quite got off the ground. Planned memorials faltered.

That this is so is remarkable. She was at her death America's best known and most widely hailed woman. Some went so far

This is the eighth in our occasional series of "Reconsiderations." Previous essays have examined the works of Louis Hartz, Richard M. Titmuss, Herbert Croly, Marshall McLuhan, Frederick Douglass, Bertrand de Jouvenel, and James Coleman.

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as to compare her to her hero, Abraham Lincoln. The mourning at her death was international. She had been in the public consciousness for over four decades when she died: first, as the extraordinary young founder of Hull-House, the settlement house *par excellence*, and, second, as a nationally recognized advocate for fair treatment of America's immigrant communities. She wrote complex works of social theory—such as *Democracy and Social Ethics* (1902) and her best-selling autobiography, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, which has never gone out of print—but also popular works, including a column in *The Ladies Home Journal*, which in her era included serious social commentary. She had access to presidents and prime ministers even as she regularly supped with Hull-House residents and other members of the 19th-ward immigrant community. Her pacifist activities tarnished her reputation during World War I, but, by her death, her reputation had been largely restored.

Addams' fall from public grace during World War I, due to her opposition to the war, is far too complex a tale to tell here. Suffice it to say that she not only opposed Woodrow Wilson's determination to enter the war, but saw Versailles as a blighted peace that set the stage for future conflict. The anti-immigrant assaults and hysteria of that period shook her deeply. The fact that these were fueled and legitimated by the highest reaches of the United States government diminished her faith in the state as a reliable instrument for social good. After the war, she worked with Herbert Hoover in bringing food relief to the starving and malnourished in war-torn Europe. She developed a strong admiration for Hoover, which led her to twice vote for him for president. Earlier, Addams had been a Bull Mooser and had seconded Theodore Roosevelt's nomination for president on the Bull Moose ticket in 1912. She had voted for Wilson in 1916 only to be disappointed and chagrined by his policies. She had also voted for Eugene Debs in 1920. Clearly, she cannot be ideologically cast in any simple way.

The reasons for Jane Addams' cultural eclipse are complex. New Deal-era welfare programs controlled and administered by the federal government soon supplanted the settlement-house movement Jane Addams had pioneered and altered settle-

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ment activities so that they no longer conformed to her capacious vision. Jane Addams thought of those who came and went at the Hull-House settlement as citizens, or citizens-in-becoming, not as clients. After the New Deal, the names of settlements like Hull-House were retained, but the model was transformed radically. Then the fight against Nazism, followed by a long cold war struggle against Soviet-style tyranny, made Jane Addams' pacifism seem naïve at best. Now is a propitious moment to rethink her legacy. The Cold War is over. The shortcomings of the welfare state are visible to Right and Left alike. What does Jane Addams offer as an alternative? Is there anything in her life and thought worth reconsidering?

The critics

The answer is yes, but one has to wade through a good bit of incomprehension and outright hostility. During her lifetime, much of the hostility came from the far Right, although she was attacked by the Marxist and socialist Left as well. The anti-immigrant hysteria of the World War I era left Addams open to the charge that she was coddling dangerous aliens and disloyal "hyphenated-Americans," in the super-charged rhetoric of that era.

In recent years, however, she has been taken to task by those who argue that the settlement-house movement she pioneered was just another way—a particularly sneaky way—to "normalize" the poor and "homogenize" them by "forcing" them to become Americans. An example of this sort of depreciation appears in the 1991 volume *American Nervousness, 1903: An Anecdotal History* by literary historian and theorist Tom Lutz. Discussing Addams with undisguised contempt, Lutz attacks her for her supposed insensitivity to what we now call multiculturalism. He includes Addams among the "haughty few" who felt a "need to civilize the masses" and slams her for including as a "prime ingredient in the routine for her inmates a course of reading in the classics of Anglo-American literature." In this disdainful rendering, Jane Addams' immigrant neighbors in the 19th ward of Chicago, free to come and go as they pleased through the open door at Hull-House, become inmates of a coercive institution that cruelly subjects

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them to forced readings of Sophocles and George Eliot. Lutz apparently doesn't know (and doesn't care) that the literature classes were among the most popular of the vast array of activities at Hull-House. Also excluded from mention are the classics from other cultural traditions that were read, appreciated, and performed as drama. These traditions encompassed a wide variety of immigrant groups in the neighborhood, including Italians, Bohemians, Greeks, and Russian Jews.

Another book that charges Addams with a desire to generate homogeneity and to defuse class consciousness is *Pluralism and Progressives: Hull House and the New Immigrants, 1890-1919*, by Riva Shpak Lissak. Lissak calls 19th-ward immigrants "helpless masses," alleging that this is the way Addams referred to her neighbors, although the characterization is nowhere found in Addams' own writings. Lissak's primary complaint seems to be that through Hull-House efforts, a nascent, unified class consciousness was strangled at birth, although there is no evidence that such is the case. As sociologist Mary Jo Deegan notes: "The consistent misinterpretation of Addams' stance on immigrants is truly difficult to understand. Although condescending passages can be found ..., her overwhelmingly more frequent and articulate stance against such attitudes far outweighs these other portions of her writings."

My hunch is that it *is* Addams' undeniable moral seriousness and her clear project of moralizing the often desperate and demoralized conditions of the "congested quarters" (as she put it) of the immigrant city that her critics object to. Perhaps their hostility also arises from Addams' insistence that there was dignity in the provision made for the tending to the bodies of the young and the old, sowing and sewing, planting and harvesting, covers for bodies, bread for stomachs, and cool hands on fevered brows. It wasn't only that so much of this had historically been women's work, and hence devalued. The labor of the male peasant in the field or the grinding repetitiveness of early assembly-line factory production are rarely lifted up or considered the stuff of a dignified and meaningful life. Addams sought the dignity in this work even as she tried to mitigate—one of her favorite words—the conditions in which immigrant families and workers found them-

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selves. She was never drawn to abstract, utopian schemes. For Addams, one must always begin with the concrete situation in which people find themselves, and one must always take one's cues from them as to what they need, what they fear, and what they hope for.

The dangers of dogma

In *Twenty Years at Hull-House*, Addams tells a moral parable on the need for social reformers to keep their feet on the ground and their heads out of the clouds. She references Nathaniel Hawthorne's short story, "Ethan Brand," a tale about a lime-burner who had left his village and begun "his search for the Unpardonable Sin," an "IDEA" that overtook him and drove him out of his village and into the night. Brand returns one dark night and announces that he has made his discovery. The unpardonable sin is that of an "intellect that triumphed over the sense of brotherhood with man and reverence for God, and sacrificed everything to its mighty claims!" The unpardonable sin of intellect is to create an overarching ideological system that tries to force life to conform to its model. This was part of Addams' argument against the Marxists, who persisted (as she puts it) in claiming that her refusal to convert to their point of view demonstrated that she was "caught in the coils of capitalism" or, alternatively, that she was really a socialist but just "too much of a coward to say so." She tells a droll story meant to illustrate socialist utopianism and ideological naïvete, noting that one ardent socialist, during one of the weekly Hull-House drawing-room discussions, had held that "socialism will cure the toothache." A second interlocutor, not to be outdone, upped the ante, insisting that "when every child's teeth were systematically cared for from the beginning, toothache would disappear from the face of the earth." Jane Addams knew we would always have the toothache.

Hull-House was a place where social theories were debated in the "Working Man's Social Science Club," so Addams was familiar with every brand of socialism around. Although Chicago was "full of social theorists," she refused to be drawn into what she called "the wilderness of dogma." She illus-

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trated this in a variety of ways, through stories and parables that make vivid what happens when compromise becomes a dirty word and justice another name for unyielding wrath. Pro-union and pro-labor, she nonetheless hated strikes and the ways in which the strikes of her day created enmity and divided cities into hostile and warring camps. She illustrated the danger of dogmatism with one of her many parables, here drawn from her 1910 autobiography, *Twenty Years at Hull-House*.

> I was called upon by a manufacturing company to act as one of three arbitrators in a perplexing struggle between themselves, a group of trade-unionists and a non-union employee of their establishment. The non-union man who was the cause of the difficulty had ten years before sided with his employers in a prolonged strike and had bitterly fought the union. He had been so badly injured at that time, that in spite of long months of hospital care he had never afterward been able to do a full day's work, although his employers had retained him for a decade at full pay in recognition of his loyalty. At the end of ten years the once defeated union was strong enough to enforce its demands for a union shop, and in spite of the distaste of the firm for the arrangement, no obstacle to harmonious relations with the union remained but the refusal of the trade-unionists to receive as one of their members the old crippled employee, whose spirit was broken at last and who was now willing to join the union and to stand with his old enemies for the sake of retaining his place. But the union men would not receive "a traitor," and the firm flatly refused to dismiss so faithful an employee.

The matter was turned over to arbitrators, one of whom was Jane Addams. Frustratingly, she doesn't give us the specifics of the outcome, perhaps because it is the dynamic of unforgiving dogmatism she wishes to highlight—that and the need for men of equable temperament to hold firm in their refusal to join one side or the other in such a way that they lose their human sympathy.

Social feminism

Jane Addams was an ameliorist. She insisted that the means of social change were integrally linked to their ends. Social upheavals tend to bring the most violent and unscrupulous persons to the fore. Social change should be accompanied by

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patient efforts to persuade others of the importance of the reforms being sought. Unsurprisingly, this attitude put her in the midst of her own personal turmoil as a member of the first generation of college-educated women. Addams was torn between what she called "the family claim" and "the social claim," her shorthand for a commitment to work in the wider world, the world outside the realm of domesticity. Her solution to this dilemma was to insist that one could not abandon either claim. Both are legitimate. She helped to inaugurate an approach that came to be called "social feminism."

Social feminism stresses the importance of women's ties to the well-springs of tradition and extols the centrality of family and children in their lives, even for those who do not marry or have children of their own, as in Addams' own case. This new feminism pushed for special protection for children and women workers and even opposed the first attempt to pass an equal-rights amendment in the 1920s. It was feared that such an amendment might imperil hard-fought-for legislation that recognized women's dual tasks as mothers and wage workers. Social feminists also fought for a "family wage" or a "living wage," insisting that an entire family should not be caught up in the system of wage work. Society, they argued, had a stake in ensuring that the small world of families, childrearing, and community activity was tended to as well.

In this sense, the domestic arena is viewed as a springboard into wider civic life rather than as an inhibition to civic matters. Women had traditionally been moral teachers and the providers of bread. It was necessary not to abandon these primordial tasks but to extend them into civic life. Addams rejected the notion that women were morally purer or better than men, although she believed that their sympathies were often differently engaged. She also rejected victimization. As a young student at Rockford Seminary for Women in Illinois (later Rockford College), she had written a remarkable essay on how seductive "being little" can be. "Being little" means having privileged status that confers both innocence and unearned nobility, without accountability. She held that women were carriers of a particular morality that was universal in its scope and application and that emphasized endurance, stability, relationships, and care. Women, along with men, are re-

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sponsible, and they can and should act.

The class system

Addams appreciated the dangers of mutual incomprehension. Her idea of Hull-House was as a place for mutual interpretation of the social classes to one another, although the term "class" was one she eschewed, telling a reporter at one point that she found the notion of warring social classes "un-American." She acknowledged, however, that people found themselves in vastly different life circumstances. Those who were less privileged had legitimate complaints that they could and should raise. But this should be done in the interest of reform, not upheaval, as those who suffer the most in times of social chaos are, in fact, the least powerful and privileged.

The most horrible fact of the early wage labor system in which immigrant families found themselves ensnared was the toll it took on families. She tells tales of children locked in their rooms for 12 hours or more when their mothers went to work; of a child with a "curved spine due to the fact that for three years she had been tied all day long to the leg of the kitchen table, only released at noon by her older brother who hastily ran in from a neighboring factory to share his lunch with her."

Harsh economic necessity left women few options, and children paid the price directly. The degradation of the family claim coarsened all social relations. While some mothers were gone all day, others were trapped with their children in the sweating system, working day and night in poorly ventilated and lit rooms. She offers details in her autobiography: "I remember a little girl of four who pulled out basting threads hour after hour, sitting on a stool at the feet of her Bohemian mother, a little bunch of human misery." No child should wind up a "little bunch of human misery." If society is to tend to the requirements of the family claim, it must structure the social claim in such a way that no child experiences the misery Addams describes. She was an ardent advocate of a family wage and was convinced that the mothers of young children should not work full-time and certainly should not be forced to work full-time.

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The cult of frankness

Given her life-long emphasis on how to enhance family stability and make it possible for parents, especially mothers, to tend to their own children, Addams found the 1920s flapper era rather distressing. She couldn't figure out the "astounding emphasis upon sex." If women of her generation who responded to the social claim often did not marry because they believed they could not do their life's work and raise a family at the same time, many young "flappers" appeared to have rejected both the family claim and the social claim in favor of a generalized hedonism. She laments the gaggle of "half-baked" pseudo-Freudian lecturers running all over the country preaching the gospel of the repressive evils of self-control.

A gospel of frankness, holding that one owed natural impulses uninhibited recognition, had triumphed. For Addams, however, uninhibited recognition was precisely what natural impulses were not owed. Instead, they were owed social forms in which to develop, channels through which to flow. The "new cult of frankness" she found deplorable and not infrequently cruel. Duty was derided, and a will to power substituted. In practice, this led not to a new and better self but to a more conformist self lacking the capacity for self-discipline and self-criticism. Too often, those who embraced this new gospel paradoxically became less free, insofar as they saw themselves as the playthings of "blind forces beyond their control." Not the devil but the libido made them do it. Addams was a passionate advocate for moral formation—for sublimation, if you will—for only through the process of shaping and channeling can our impulses be directed toward the true work of civilization and respond to the family claim and the social claim alike.

Addams believed that public authorities should work to create opportunities for good, clean fun and recreation in their cities. She lamented that "the soldiers of Cromwell shut up the people's playhouses and destroyed their pleasure fields." Ever since that time, "the Anglo-Saxon city has turned over the provision for public recreation to the most unscrupulous members of the community." The result was that joy was confused with lust and gaiety with debauchery. This confusion

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invited the debauched to sell debauchery, and sell it they did: Even in Jane Addams' day, the traffic in vice was a multi-million dollar affair.

In Addams' view, the modern city too often degraded that which should be exalted. There was, first, the "wrecked foundations of domesticity," as families imploded from pressures that came from all directions. Generations were driven apart. Men felt helpless and useless and deserted their families. Women and young children were driven into soul-killing labor. Imaginations ran wild in degenerate directions, given the horrible overcrowding of tenements, the absolute lack of privacy for intimacy, and the over-agitation of young minds that could not really comprehend what they saw and heard but were vaguely excited by it all.

The work of culture

The lessons Addams aimed to teach are lessons that must be relearned with each generation. Do not forget the uniqueness of the one in an effort to aid the many. Do not reduce human beings to abstract categories. Do not self-centeredly rush to the excitement of violence and confrontation in the mistaken belief that this exhibits greater courage than does forebearance and the tedious negotiations of democratic politics, including the often hard-to-swallow pill of compromise. As Herbert Leibowitz, in an essay on Addams that is rare in its insight, put it:

> Addams avoids three errors radicals often commit: She does not talk about people, her neighbors or her adversaries, in reifying abstractions like "the masses" or "the bosses" (them and us); she never invokes history as a force inevitably taking her side; and she does not allow her compassion for the injuries of children or for pinched and desperate breadwinners to romanticize the poor.

Addams understood full well that social change destroys even as it generates; that every new technology leaves people behind; that the delicate and fragile skeins of intergenerality are easily and often cruelly and carelessly broken. One of her favorite essayists, Matthew Arnold, influenced her thinking in this matter. In *Culture and Anarchy*, Arnold argued that language has the power to kill and wound spirits. Violent deeds

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often follow from violent words. He took to task what he called "Jacobinism" with "its fierce hatred of the past and of those whom it makes liable for the sins of the past." The work of culture, by contrast, "resists this tendency" in keen awareness that we are all guilty, one way or another, of our culture's sins, and that "fierce hatred" of what has gone before corrodes the living by cutting the living off from the dead.

This is at rock-bottom Addams' belief as well. She imagined each generation like a thin sheet floating on the vast ocean of the past. We are born indebted creatures; hopefully, during our brief life-spans, we contribute something to the vast ocean that sustains human life. We must never spurn "the pit whence we were digged," as many children of immigrants did their immigrant parents and grandparents, with their strange accents, clothing, and customs. Much of Hull-House's commitment to interpretation and reconciliation was devoted to relationships between generations *within* immigrant communities, not exclusively to interpretation between immigrant and nonimmigrant communities. It was a delicate and complex task done wonderfully well, and it is high time it was remembered for the work of culture it was. Though Jane Addams has had her day, she has yet to be given her due.

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The costs and benefits of cost-benefit analysis

ADAM WOLFSON

ARGUMENTS over public policies have a way of taking on a life of their own, coming to exist almost without reference to the policies themselves. Before a policy has been adopted, when everything is still up for grabs and the stakes are high, the participants in the debate put forward carefully reasoned arguments meant to convince. There is no room for recondite analysis or pedantry. Once a policy is decided upon, the debate has a tendency to subside, though occasionally it does not, and then not infrequently the arguments have a way of becoming ever more exquisite and divorced from reality. Since the basic positions have already been stated and restated and are familiar to all sides, the debate takes on a stylized character. The debaters play their assigned roles but with a nod and a wink, for they know that the policy under question will continue more or less as before, regardless of the debate's outcome. This can encourage all sorts of elaborate, scholarly commentary, but is also a sign of the inconsequentiality of what is being said.

Such seems to be the case with the now half-century old debate over cost-benefit analysis, the subject of a new volume, titled *Cost-Benefit Analysis: Legal, Economic, and Philosophical Perspectives*.† The editors, Matthew D. Adler and Eric A. Posner, point out in their introduction that although the use of cost-benefit analysis has spread throughout the federal government, academic opinion on this budgetary tool is sharply divided. As one of the contributors to the volume puts it, "Cost-benefit analysis influences, if not controls, many public decisions of great import," but "its justificatory foundations remain at best suspect and at worse in ruins." The present volume, an

† University of Chicago Press. 351 pp. $39.00.

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illuminating and challenging work of scholarship, nicely illustrates this point. The book emerged from a conference held at the University of Chicago Law School that included some of the foremost scholars in the fields of law, philosophy, and economics, including Amartya Sen, Martha C. Nussbaum, Cass R. Sunstein, Gary S. Becker, and Richard A. Posner. The brilliance of the authors is not to be doubted. Who would have thought that the subject of cost-benefit analysis could inspire a debate over Sophocles's *Antigone* or invocations of John Dewey, Aristotle, and Hegel? Or lead to analyses of the nature of human cognition and rational deliberation? Cost-benefit analysis can also, it seems, lead otherwise mild-mannered scholars to become ill-tempered. Sen denounces cost-benefit analysis as "a daydream," while another contributor, Henry S. Richardson, calls it "stupid."

IT'S not immediately clear why cost-benefit analysis should inspire such erudite commentary and impassioned polemics. One might begin by asking what cost-benefit analysis is. At one level, this is a difficult question to answer, as the authors of this volume offer different and at times contradictory definitions. Some believe it is rooted in utilitarian and consequentialist theories, while others deny this to be the case. Meanwhile, other contributors agree with Richard Posner that "we should not worry whether cost-benefit analysis is well grounded in any theory of value. We should ask how well it serves whatever goals we have." Despite this confusion, a clear, basic description of cost-benefit analysis can be found in Lewis A. Kornhauser's contribution.

> Cost-benefit analysis refers to a narrower class of procedures that evaluate policies in terms of the net benefits the policies provide to individuals. Benefits are then usually defined solely in terms of the change in individual well-being that the policy induces, and costs are generally measured in terms of the monetary costs of resources required to implement the project. Again, typically, individual well-being is understood as the satisfaction of subjective preferences; in practice these subjective values are inferred from market choices of individuals or are elicited through survey techniques. Comparison of costs and benefits thus requires that the cost-benefit analyst measure subjective benefits in monetary terms.

From this definition, one can see what some of the fuss is about—why it is that conservatives champion cost-benefit analysis while liberals criticize it. Cost-benefit analysis is, as many

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of the contributors point out, inseparable from free-market principles, and further, it attempts to apply these principles to the conduct of public affairs. Like the marketplace, cost-benefit analysis takes individual preferences as its guide, and it assumes that government should serve these preferences, not direct or educate them. This troubles liberals, as does cost-benefit analysis's method of measurement: It "monetizes" important values—such as a clean environment or health and safety—that liberals argue should not be expressed in terms of dollars and cents. Liberal critics also charge that cost-benefit analysis gives short shrift to intrinsic values, like the right to life and liberty. Such values should be thought of as absolute, regardless of the monetary cost. Finally, still others criticize cost-benefit analysis for overlooking questions of fairness: For example, certain policies might pass a cost-benefit analysis but only at the expense of minorities and the poor.

GIVEN these concerns, one might expect that at least some of the liberal contributors to this volume would reject cost-benefit analysis outright. Surprisingly, none of them do, all endorsing its use as a practical tool or input into the policy-making process. For example, Richardson, who raises the most stringent philosophic objections to cost-benefit analysis in the volume, and who repeatedly calls it "stupid," finds himself in basic agreement with the American Enterprise Institute's (AEI) 1996 "Statement of Principles" on cost-benefit analysis. Concerned about the growing costs of federal regulations in the areas of health, safety, and the environment, AEI gathered together a number of prominent economists, including Kenneth J. Arrow, Robert W. Hahn, and Robert N. Stavins. In their summary statement, they declared:

> Benefit-cost analysis should be required for all major regulatory decisions, but agency heads should not be bound by a strict benefit-cost test. Instead, they should be required to consider available benefit-cost analyses and to justify the reasons for their decision in the event that the expected costs of a regulation far exceed the expected benefits.

If cost-benefit analysis's harshest critics can agree with this statement by a conservative think tank, then it's fair to ask what the debate is really all about. When the fireworks and theory are set aside, it would seem that Left and Right are in basic agreement: Cost-benefit analysis should not decide policy questions but should instead be one part of the overall deci-

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sion-making process. As Adler and Posner note, the ideological divide over cost-benefit analysis is more apparent than real.

Though Adler and Posner's volume is remarkably comprehensive, taking in legal, philosophic, and economic perspectives on cost-benefit analysis, it leaves one area unexplored, an area that might shed some light on this surprising consensus. As the authors point out, no one has explained the "political fortunes" of cost-benefit analysis, why, for example, such ideological opponents as Ronald Reagan and Bill Clinton both endorsed its use by federal agencies, or why cost-benefit analysis was relatively popular in the 1960s, fell from favor in the 1970s, and then staged a comeback in the 1980s and 1990s. What is needed, in other words, is an explanation of the origins and development of cost-benefit analysis in government.

SOME of this history has in fact been told, by James T. Campen in his 1986 book *Benefit, Cost, and Beyond* and D.W. Pearce in his 1983 book *Cost-Benefit Analysis*, and it accounts for why liberals, no less than conservatives, are in favor of cost-benefit analysis in government. Cost-benefit analysis developed first as a governmental practice and only later as a theory. Its spread closely shadowed the rise of the administrative state in the twentieth century. The federal government first endorsed a cost-benefit approach with the passage of the River Harbor Act of 1902, which required the Army's Corps of Engineers to evaluate federal expenditures using cost-benefit tests. This was followed by the Flood Control Act of 1936, which applied a cost-benefit test to flood-control projects. Yet, as the political scientist V. O. Key wrote in 1940, "the basic budgetary problem"—namely, "On what basis shall it be decided to allocate x dollars to activity A instead of activity B?"—had still not been solved. Policy makers, Key pointed out, had as yet no scientific standards to go by, and relied instead on "their impressionistic judgment."

But in the 1950s and 1960s, a number of prominent economists began to develop the theory behind cost-benefit analysis. At the same time, the prestige of economics grew and its methods spread to other disciplines—law, public administration, and political science. The breakthrough at the level of federal policy occurred on August 25, 1965. On that day, Lyndon Johnson directed the members of his cabinet and agency directors to adopt cost-benefit analysis as part of the new Planning-Programming-Budgeting System, also known by its acronym of PPBS. (*The Public Interest*, as it happens, took a lively

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interest in cost-benefit analysis in those early years, running five or six articles on the subject and, characteristically, giving it two cheers.) Far from being a conservative tool to reign in Big Government, which was then only in its infancy, cost-benefit analysis was heralded in its first official introduction to Washington, D.C., as a means to fulfill the ideals of the Great Society. That was Johnson's hope, anyway. In his words: "The objective of this program is ... to use the most modern management tools so that the full promise of a finer life can be brought to every American at the least possible cost." It would be, Johnson exclaimed, a way "to bring the Great Society closer to all the people."

Though nearly every president since Johnson has endorsed cost-benefit analysis, even if not precisely in name, never again would any speak so eloquently as Johnson of its progressive aspirations. Richard Nixon wanted studies done of the trade-off between economic growth and increasing regulations for safety, as did Gerald Ford, who requested an assessment of safety regulations "in terms of the costs added and benefits gained." Even Jimmy Carter called for economic analyses of federal regulations. But it was Ronald Reagan who gave cost-benefit analysis a bad name among liberals by issuing an executive order that "regulatory action shall not be undertaken unless the potential benefits to society from the regulations outweigh the potential costs to society." Increasingly, cost-benefit analysis came to be seen as part of the conservative attack on the federal government. Yet, lo and behold, when Clinton came to power in 1993, he endorsed Reagan's approach, though with the stipulation that benefits must be viewed as expansively as possible, and not in monetary terms alone. As Robert Hahn points out in his informative contribution to this volume, cost-benefit analysis has also colonized state governments, over half of which have incorporated it into their regulatory apparatuses.

THIS brief history suggests that cost-benefit analysis is less a conservative method of limiting government's activities than a tool for making the modern (liberal) administrative state more effective. This certainly was Johnson's understanding, and would explain why even the most vociferous liberal critics of cost-benefit analysis in Adler and Posner's volume are perfectly content to see its use continued. Consider Amartya Sen's observation that cost-benefit analysis

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> is a forceful demand for fuller articulation, which involves the rejection of a commonly adopted position hallowed by tradition, to wit, that we may know what is right without knowing why it is right. At the risk of oversimplification, explicit valuation is a part of the insistence on a rationalist approach, which demands full explication of the reasons for taking a decision, rather than relying on an unreasoned conviction or on an implicitly derived conclusion.

Seen in this light, cost-benefit analysis replaces a Burkean approach to governance, one that relies on tradition rather than a rationalistic accounting. An approach that relies on the "impressionistic judgment" of politicians and administrators makes way for the complex formulas of the cost-benefit technician.

Indeed, cost-benefit analysis requires a corps of highly trained experts or technocrats in government. Johnson recognized this when he observed in 1965, "To make this work will take good people, the best you now have and the best you can find." *The Public Interest* flagged this issue from the start, observing in one article that cost-benefit analysis would require "a new class of decision makers," namely economists, and in another that the cost-benefit analyst "is an imperialist at heart." Even if cost-benefit analysis is not used as a "decision rule"—and few think it should be—but as a "decision tool," it still adds an extra layer of experts to the operations of government. Robert Hahn makes this point in an essay on the overall effectiveness of cost-benefit analysis in the 1996 book *Risks, Costs, and Lives Saved*. Hahn notes that bureaucrats are all too likely to cook the books to suit their interests and to distort the genuine consequences of a regulation. Politics, it seems, has a way of getting the best of even rigorous economic analysis of regulation, a problem that Hahn somewhat archly suggests might be solved by creating a "technocratic elite" to regulate the regulators. Yet that too is no more than a Platonic dream, since, as Aaron Wildavsky argued long ago in these pages, "To expect, however, that the method itself ... would not be subject to manipulation in the political process is to say that we shall be governed by formula and not by men."

As long as there is an administrative state, cost-benefit analysis is unavoidable, and the more accurately it is performed the better. On that there is near universal agreement. But cost-benefit analysis is no panacea. For it is unlikely that the public will be moved to oppose regulations based on a

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toting up of costs and benefits, or that federal bureaucrats will bend their wills to cost-benefit calculations. In the end, containing the costs of government regulation, if that is now the goal, requires not only an economic reckoning but also a political debate over the proper bounds and purposes of government.

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Bringing up baby

KAY S. HYMOWITZ

IN the middle ages, the idea of childhood did not exist, the French historian Phillipe Aries once famously said. He was surely wrong about this, for childhood is a human universal. In *Kids: How Biology and Culture Shape the Way We Raise Our Children*,† Meredith F. Small, a Cornell anthropologist, sets out to popularize recent findings in her field about the evolutionary and biological underpinnings of human childhood as well as the broad cultural variations that managed to trick Aries. That she is so much more successful at the former than the latter offers a salient lesson. Hoping to encourage her readers to look more objectively at their own childrearing practices—"Other cultures teach us there are other ways to socialize, other ways to play, and other ways for kids to become moral citizens," she explains—her own analysis unwittingly demonstrates how unlikely is an unbiased view. It seems that culture, in this case the cultural value of individualism, is as much a part of us as biology.

Childhood is not only a human universal, but like complex language and tool use, it distinguishes us from other animals. Consider: Most mammals go straight from infancy to puberty. True, there are other social animals like dolphins and wolves with a life stage we call juvenile, in which they are not reproductively active. But these youths can feed themselves, and they are largely independent from their mothers. The human infant, on the other hand, comes into the world a neurological mess, so unformed that the first 12 months have been called an extra-uterine fetal year. Human newborns can't even hold on to their mothers or hold their heads up, abilities shared by all of their cousin apes. Human young remain nutritionally dependent far longer than other primates; humans are the only species that continue to provide food for their juveniles. De-

† Doubleday. 271 pp. $24.95.

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pending on nutritional and other still barely understood factors, humans take between 10 and 15 years to become capable of reproduction, but even then they are not full-fledged adults. Brain imaging has begun to confirm the frustrations of parents and teachers everywhere: The adolescent's frontal cortex, the seat of judgment and decision making, remains in an immature state while the limbic system—the seat of raw emotions like fear and rage—is in overdrive.

SO why would nature select for such an inefficient, sleep-depriving, energy-sapping, anxiety-producing, and maddening life stage? Anthropologists like Small, evolutionary psychologists, and neuroscientists have converged on an extraordinary answer: Because the human brain is so much bigger and so much more flexible than that of other animals, it needs years to grow and organize itself. Somewhere around a million and a half years ago, human brain size doubled from a chimp-like 400 cubic centimeters to a more noble 800. The problem was that in order to walk upright, this big-brained hominid also needed a relatively small pelvic size. Nature solved this struggle between big brains and small hips through several means. First, it saw to it that the infant bones would be incompletely ossified, so that the cranial casing for the large baby brain could squeeze through the mother's narrow birth canal. (Hence, babies' fontanel or "soft spot" on the top of their heads.) Second, because the brain requires more calories than other sorts of tissue, nature ensured that during its final weeks in the womb, the fetus would bulk up enough to be born a large, soft thing with four to eight times more fat than the wizened baby monkey. But the primary means nature used to evolve a creature that could both walk upright and think deep thoughts was to produce an infant whose brain would have to accomplish a good deal of its development outside of the womb. At birth, the human brain is only a quarter of what it will become. It takes 10 years for the brain to reach 95 percent of its size. And the human brain is as complex as it is large. At least another decade passes before the brain fine-tunes the delicate relationship between its reasoning cortex and its instinct-bound limbic system.

If the immature brain explains why childhood became an evolutionary necessity, it also hints at how humans have managed to create such an immense variety of cultures. Unlike animals whose behaviors are almost entirely scripted by instinct, humans are flexible in their responses to their environ-

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ment. The panorama of global childhoods is a good illustration of the plasticity of the human brain. While all cultures see to it that babies are fed, groomed, and kept away from danger, childhood differs radically from one place and era to the next due to a mysterious combination of historical accident, tradition, and environmental pressure.

To see human nature in its purest, most original state, evolutionary psychologists often like to ponder human existence in what the attachment theorist John Bowlby called the "environment of evolutionary adaptation" (EEA)—the landscape in which the human brain evolved. However, even the hunter-gatherer societies that inhabit something resembling the EEA differ markedly in the way they treat their children. The !Kung San of Botswana and Namibia for instance, indulge their young. Mothers are in nearly continuous skin-to-skin contact with their young children, hauling them on so many foraging expeditions that it has been estimated that by the age of four, children have been carried for 4,900 miles. After four, children wander freely within the small hut-enclosed village, where they rarely hear a harsh word. In contrast to this idyll, children of the Hazda, a hunter-gatherer group in northern Tanzania, endure a Dickensian youth. Children are weaned at two and a half and are all but abandoned by their mothers, who work long hours in the fields. Youngsters themselves are quickly put to work gathering, digging roots, fetching water or firewood, and taking care of younger children, and are scolded repeatedly for their ineptitude.

WHAT all of these discoveries about the unformed infant brain confirm is that culture is not some kind of artificial costume adorning a universally shared human nature. Culturally defined experience actually shapes the individual brain. Phonological development offers one easy example of this process. Human babies are born with an overabundance of synapses that give them the capacity to produce and to hear the full range of human sounds, from clicks of the tongue used by San to the rolling r's of the French. But as they are exposed to San, French, or Korean, as the case may be, young children, perhaps as early as six months, begin to lose the ability to discriminate or to produce the sounds they do not hear. The brain "prunes" away the unused, and therefore unnecessary, synapses. Hence, Korean children will gradually lose much of their ability to discriminate between 'r' and 'l', sounds that do not appear in their native language. Cultural psychologists—

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anthropologists and psychologists who posit that culture permeates and transforms the human psyche—make the case that something similar happens with other sorts of cultural information. They found not only that people reason and emote in culturally prescribed ways, but also that culture shapes their conceptions of themselves and the world around them. Yet though these conceptions come from the outside, individuals adopt them as their own and feel them so deeply that they are sometimes willing to die for them.

A fascinating study conducted by the cultural psychologist Richard A. Shweder and two colleagues, and not mentioned by Small, hints at how quickly and profoundly cultural notions implant themselves in the individual psyche. The researchers asked 180 adults and children ranging in age from five to thirteen in two vastly different communities, Hyde Park, Illinois and the orthodox Hindu temple town of Orissa, India, to evaluate a series of hypothetical situations on moral grounds. The results showed that while the American and Indian adults shared certain moral principles—incest is wrong, as is ignoring the victim of an accident—they also differed markedly. The Indians believed it was wrong to eat beef and marry someone of a different status while the Americans did not. On the other hand, Americans believed it was wrong for an adult to cane a misbehaving child and for a son to inherit more money than a daughter, while the Indians did not. None of this is particularly surprising, but what was notable was that the children, even as young as five, held precisely the same beliefs as their elders. More importantly, all of the subjects viewed their own beliefs—whether food taboos or equal rights to inheritance—not as social convention but as part of a natural, unalterable moral order. "The idea of a natural right to personal liberty is highly developed in the American five- to seven-year-olds," the authors observe.

IN her well-received first book, *Our Babies, Ourselves: How Biology and Culture Shape the Way We Parent,* Small describes how just about everything American mothers do is geared toward instilling in their infants the natural fact of their independence. Most mothers throughout human history have held their babies almost continuously in their arms or in hip slings; they have breast fed them for several years and slept with them for even longer. These behaviors not only protected babies from fires, dirt, and animals; they communicated the collective ethos of their culture. By contrast, Ameri-

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can mothers dedicate themselves to their babies' autonomy. American mothers not only do not sleep with their young children; they usually put them in a crib in their own rooms, an unconscionably cruel act in the eyes of most cultures. Believing that they are giving them the freedom to move their limbs and to see the passing parade, American mothers put their infants into "containers" such as infant seats, car seats, walkers, and strollers. As soon as a baby is crawling or toddling, they "baby-proof" their homes to give their children freedom to explore their surroundings. These days, when many American babies are in day-care centers for 40 hours a week or longer under the supervision of a relative stranger, infant autonomy may be breaking cultural records.

In the past decade or so, as Americans parents have responded to the new cultural and economic realities of the information age, this traditional emphasis on autonomy has undergone a mild adaptation. To ensure their children's individual achievement in an economy requiring "lifelong learning," parents are putting more of their energies into nurturing their children's cognitive growth, a goal that evolutionary psychology and neuroscience have surely played some role in promoting. They provide their newborn students with high-contrast graphic mobiles to develop their visual acuity and Mozart tapes to develop their spatial-temporal reasoning. To develop their language skills, they talk to their babies ceaselessly. Not long ago, I listened to a mother in the locker room of a health club as she undressed her six-month-old baby for a dip in the swimming pool: "I'm taking off your shoe. It's a blue shoe. I'm going to put your shoe down here and then take off your sock. Your white sock. Ah, there are your toes," and so on. Though it might have struck most of history's mothers as the rantings of a woman on the edge, this patter had a solemn cultural purpose: to begin to encourage the child to think of herself as a rational thinker capable of distancing herself from her own actions, an active learner, and ultimately, an independent achiever in a complex economy.

SHARING her profession's propensity for cultural relativism, Small would never admit that these childrearing practices, not to mention their basis in a belief in a natural right to personal liberty, have contributed greatly to human progress, producing individuals capable of fighting disease, building wealth, and maintaining democratic institutions. Nor, unfortunately, in prose that ranges from teary sentimentality to con-

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descending expert-speak, can she provide more than banal insights into American childrearing. But there can be no question that this individualism has a dark side for children, especially today as the drive toward self-fulfillment has become unmoored from traditional sources of restraint. "Learning right from wrong is necessary for long-term group living," Small writes. But ideals of individual self-fulfillment severely complicate the task of moral teaching and development, and parents seem increasingly loath to let "learning right from wrong" inhibit their children's self-expression. Without appearing to grasp what a remarkable cultural statement it is, Small repeats her sister's childrearing philosophy: "I never want anyone to say the word 'no' to my children. I want them to think anything is possible." Objecting that schooling is a relatively recent and perhaps maladaptive human invention, she adds that schools try to make it so that "[children] toe the line, that they become part of the group"; they do not sufficiently encourage "the individual child [to] discover ... new worlds." Small's anthropologically-trained mind is finally no match for her American soul.

Still, evolutionary psychologists and anthropologists like Small have something important to tell us about our species' long period of helplessness and dependency. Childhood is the period that the supple human brain needs in order to acquire not just language and fine motor skills, as so many American parents appear to have concluded, but the specific requirements of a unique social group. What happens to that social group when some adults, surely for the first time in human history, conclude that they should never "say the word 'no'" to children is a question we have yet to answer.

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Understanding Heidegger

MARK BLITZ

MANY consider Martin Heidegger to be the twentieth century's most significant philosopher. Arendt, Löwith, Strauss, Kojève, Gadamer, and Marcuse studied with him; Jaspers, Bultmann, Sartre, and Derrida wrote books heavily influenced by his work. Existentialism, deconstructionism, literary and art criticism, and environmentalism owe formulations, justifications, and sometimes the heart of their positions to his analyses. Indeed, Heidegger's influence is so widespread that professors from India to Indiana discuss him in thousands of books and articles, a daunting mountain of scholarship more likely to bury the student than to lead him upward.

Of course, not everyone believes his work to be powerful or even intelligible. Positivists mocked him in the twenties and thirties—how could they resist a target for whom "Nothing" is so important? The major questions about Heidegger, however, are not those posed by his critics, but those that can and should be posed by his admirers and friends. One is whether his arguments and analyses are illuminating, even when read sympathetically. A second, more controversial issue is the relation between Heidegger's thought and his support of the Nazis.

Although this support is an inescapable fact that must be understood if we are to grapple honestly with Heidegger's thought, it has justly been called too narrow a standpoint from which to assess his work as a whole. So, it is with his work that we will begin. We cannot altogether avoid or overcome the risk of trivializing it, of subjecting it to the "idle chatter" that Heidegger so brilliantly analyzed. Perhaps, however, by indicating the themes and approaches that make up Heidegger's intellectual allure we can encourage study and not merely false familiarity.

The basis of Heidegger's attractiveness lies in the importance of the topics he studied and the acuity and novelty with which he investigated them. His work not only considers the

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deepest and broadest philosophical subjects and illuminates profoundly the activity of thought itself, but also seems to offer direction for the conduct of our lives. Heidegger's fame began in the early 1920s when he taught lectures and seminars on Plato, Aristotle, the concept of time, and other subjects, and peaked with the publication in 1927 of what is still his most searching work, *Being and Time*. His influence waned during the 1930s and 1940s because of his involvement with the Nazis and the change in focus of his work, but it grew again from the 1950s onward as his analyses were recognized as a chief source of existentialism and deconstructionism. He arranged to stay alive after he died, as it were, by having his private manuscripts and many lecture courses published piece by piece. Indeed, part of his continued influence arises from the fact that there is always something new and remarkable from Heidegger, even 25 years after his death.

HEIDEGGER'S singular topic is the meaning of "Being." It is his central concern because human affairs generally and philosophy explicitly are oriented toward it. Philosophers seek to know what is, or what truly is, as opposed to what is not or what merely appears to be. Being, as Heidegger teaches us to see it, however, is not an abstract concept. Nor is it the highest or most general entity—God, say, or Plato's Good—which causes other things to be. Rather, it is that in terms of which anything at all can first be present and meaningful as what it is. It is the source of the richness in our understanding, not an empty idea. What is distinctive about human beings is not that we are rational animals, or a mysterious compound of particles and consciousness, or God's handiwork, but that we disclose Being. All of us experience our existence as something that we must determine ourselves, for the matters that concern us come to light as possibilities that we will seize or shunt aside. We therefore always somehow understand our own Being and are responsible for settling it. In fact, although they did not grasp this, previous philosophers' understanding of what is as the highest and most universal cause takes for granted the meaning of Being that first comes to light in ordinary concerns and our ordinary openness to possibilities. Why we misinterpret our Being in these causal ways is itself something for which a proper grasp of Being as such must account.

Heidegger's discussion of Being in these terms was revolutionary, even enthralling, because it appeared to discover some-

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thing fundamental that everyone else had overlooked. It would allow a new grasp of human being, and a new way to understand and categorize each of the great thinkers from Parmenides to Nietzsche. It would also allow us to see clearly the Being of what is not human, how it is that scientists, builders, artists, poets, and each of us every day have access to this Being, and why it is that what makes us human can never be reduced to the objects that chemists, physicists, and biologists study. The enormous promise and breadth of the territory Heidegger apparently discovered, the manner in which his work speaks to the chief task of our day, i.e. to clarify and save what is distinctive and best in what is human, is the true continuing source of his attraction.

Heidegger first attempted to understand Being itself by looking at and through human being. This led in *Being and Time* to his analysis of the "existentials," the structures that make possible our disclosure of Being. It was this influential analysis that became the source of existentialism. Heidegger's approach took him down several unexplored or long-forgotten paths. One was to uncover the independence, from theoretical concepts and facts, of practical work and deliberation and the things we discover in this deliberation. Mathematical physics modifies and flattens this everyday understanding by discovering the neutral, objective presence of mass and position. These neutral objects, however, can never replace what we find to be "too heavy" or what we locate "over there" in our meaningful everyday activity.

Another path of Heidegger's was to stress the importance and functions of our moods, which are neither the fleeting and misleading companions of reason nor the epiphenomena of chemical facts. Rather, moods uncover the true Being of things, as they reveal to each of us that I am inescapably the very one who I am. Nothing that we believe to cause or explain moods can show this. Moreover, it is only together with the world, the context, into which I find myself thrown through my feelings that any entity can have significance. For example, fear shows me that I am this one and no other, and it is in relation to fear and only in relation to fear that entities are threatening, horrifying, foreboding, and the like. These are not mere value judgments added on to the physical and chemical composition of things. Rather, the fearful entity is precisely the true being revealed in fear. The neutral characteristics of mass or position are not more real than our moods; indeed, the scientific view can narrow or compress this first richness.

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THE heart of human being, however, is neither the things with which we deal nor the moods we have, but our understanding. To understand is primarily to project things in their essential possibilities or mode of Being, and then to see and interpret them in these possibilities, much as a physicist projects his objects first as manipulable and quantifiable in certain ways and then proceeds with his theories and experiments. Our projections are not normally as explicit as this. Rather, we first implicitly understand something as a tool that we can deal with or as natural material that we can use: We see things as they can be related to and involved with each other to serve our ends.

Most of the time we see ourselves as basically like other entities and overlook our distinctiveness: We attend only to the things that concern us and not to our own disclosive capability. We take and determine our possibilities in the same average and leveled way as everyone else. Such "inauthenticity" can be overcome, however, if we attend to the radical nullity at the heart of our existence. This condition is revealed by holding ourselves in the mood of anxiety, a mood that fears not this thing or that but shudders before the uncanny disappearance of any meaningful things whatsoever. The radical nullity of our existence also becomes clear when we understand our death not as the demise of our animal functions but as the end of all our possibilities. Such "authentic resolve" reveals that we are responsible for disclosing meaning, for allowing it to take place.

Authenticity clearly individuates, anticipating as it does our own death and throwing us back to our own responsibility. At the same time, however, it also allows us newly to stand within the public world and its possibilities. In fact, in authenticity we are truly brought together with others of our people, mutually projecting ahead of ourselves the possibilities of our own heritage. The scope of a people and its heritage, however, is something that Heidegger leaves unexplored.

Heidegger's discussions of these and other phenomena are powerful and include tangible phenomenological descriptions that give his arguments weight. When he discusses fear and other moods, one can sense the feeling and see the acuity of his distinctions. When he describes our "lostness" in our entanglements, or our self-understanding in terms of the very same possibilities that belong to everyone else, including even the way we wish to be different from them, we can see at once the truth of what he says. When he describes the possibility of

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authenticity, we acknowledge its difficulty and danger but are nonetheless inspired by it. Despite Heidegger's true but misleading refrain that he intended only to describe a mode of human being and not an ideal, no sympathetic reader of *Being and Time* has ever wanted to be inauthentic rather than authentic. Could Heidegger for even a moment have suspected otherwise?

These topics and analyses account for Heidegger's initial appeal during the period surrounding *Being and Time*, as well as his later influence. The descriptions of our "everydayness," "anxiety," and "possible authenticity" are the core of the existential analysis of the so-called "age of anxiety" in the 1950s. And his illumination of the differences in Being among natural science's objects, human actions, and everyday implements helps us to think about what human beings are in an age overrun by materialistic explanations and manipulations. Heidegger's discussion, while it must be challenged in its own terms, liberates us from believing that mathematical physics and related social and natural sciences are the central clues to grasping the more complete human phenomena on which their own practice and meaning depend.

AFTER *Being and Time*, Heidegger continued to engage themes and confront topics that have proved to be enduring, although never, I would argue, with quite his earlier precision, depth, and range. Chief among his later efforts are his analyses of other thinkers, of works of art, and of technology.

Heidegger sought to uncover the true meaning as well as the limitations of earlier philosophers' theories by showing how their basic conceptual understandings unwittingly overlooked the dimension of man and Being that he explored. In this way, he sought to understand them better than they understood themselves, breaking down their thought and locating it in an assumed understanding of Being. Especially through his later works—above all in his analyses of Nietzsche and other thinkers, largely delivered during courses he taught in the late 1930s and subsequently published in 1961—Heidegger is a chief source for the interpretive methods known as deconstruction, now wielded with sometimes infantile self-destruction by graduate students and their negligent supervisors. Heidegger himself always paid attention to what earlier philosophers actually said, even as he went beyond them. His examinations offer penetrating analyses of central concepts—from nature, logos, and idea, to subjectivity, objectivity, and

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the Will to Power.

Heidegger was among the first in contemporary times to distinguish systematically ancient from modern thought and to restore Plato and Aristotle to genuine philosophic, not merely academic, importance. He took the history of philosophy seriously because he understood our possibilities to be necessarily historical or temporal, not eternal. His careful discussions of the Greeks in particular, especially early in his career, enabled others who followed him, such as Leo Strauss and Jacob Klein, to take them more seriously still.

In the 1930s, Heidegger carefully studied German and Greek poetry and art. In essays written and rewritten over the next 30 years, he developed a view of artworks not as imitative or expressive but as establishing and calling forth a world of meaning, a context of activity, a past that is palpable even while no longer present in the ordinary sense. These analyses are given credence by Heidegger's extraordinary discussions of works such as Van Gogh's paintings of peasants' shoes. Together with concepts from *Being and Time*, and along with works by students such as Gadamer, Heidegger's ideas have become explicitly or implicitly central to contemporary art criticism.

Heidegger also grappled with the significance of technology, an effort that culminated in his 1954 essay "The Question Concerning Technology." Our politics and culture, our whole way of being, he argued, are dominated and defined by the way we first perceive an object as something to be manipulated, transformed, and rearranged. We think of all things as standing in reserve, or being on call; everything is a resource, not excluding, perhaps most eminently including, "human resources." Heidegger's understanding of technology's influence, together with the prescience with which he saw the emerging dominance of information science, has made his work a touchstone for critics of technology. Heidegger believed or hoped that technology's dominance prepared the way for a new grasp of the dimension of man and Being, which he continued to try to describe after *Being and Time*. He claimed that his discussion of technology was not moralistic, and that trying to use or overcome technology for humane purposes only subjugates us even more firmly to it. It is obvious, however, that others influenced by his analysis need not be so pristine in their inaction.

HEIDEGGER'S support for the Nazis is especially troubling to those who recognize his gifts, for philosophical excel-

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lence is supposed to assure moral virtue or at least an ordinary moderation and decency. Of what use can the life of the mind be if it does not form a soul that becomes like the beautiful and permanent truths it seeks? What is unthinkable for Aristotle or Kant should also be unthinkable for Heidegger.

Although the outline of Heidegger's relationship with the Nazis has long been known, the full extent of his support and the details behind it are still being unearthed piece by piece, covered up by scholarly indifference, Heidegger's own lies, and his backers' blindness to the truth. Recent studies by Hugo Ott and Rudiger Safranski have made the portrait more shamefully vivid.

Heidegger first joined the Nazi party in 1933, when he became rector of Freiburg University. As rector, he sought to ground the various academic disciplines and "knowledge-service" itself in a new unity with workers and military or quasi-military activities. He spoke out in favor of Hitler's referendum to remove Germany from the League of Nations. Indeed, Heidegger was openly supportive of Hitler, concluding a long address at Freiburg in 1934 by declaiming "To the man of this unprecedented will, to our Führer Adolf Hitler—a threefold 'Sieg Heil.'" He wore the Nazi insignia and retained his party membership long after he stopped being rector, ruining the careers of students and colleagues by reporting to the authorities their insufficient attachment to National Socialism, for example their association with professors such as "the Jew Fraenkel." Heidegger's appreciation of Nazism continued after the end of the war. He voiced admiration for artists and academics who supported Nazi rule, and he wrote and spoke of the "historical singularity" and "inner truth and greatness" of "National Socialism" well into the 1940s and 1950s. These words are found in Heidegger's *Introduction to Metaphysics*, newly and ably translated by Gregory Fried and Richard Polt.†

It would be wrong to conclude from this evidence that Heidegger approved of everything the Nazis did, joined actively in their most repulsive practices, supported every scholar they favored, was altogether trusted by them, or never tried to help a Jewish colleague. He left the rectorate prematurely in 1934, was sometimes at odds with Nazi student leaders, and criticized Nazi academics such as Alfred Bauemler, editor of Nietzsche's works. In the lectures that make up his collection *Nietzsche* in particular, Heidegger deviated from Nazi philo-

† Yale University Press. 288 pp. $14.95.

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sophical orthodoxy. Yet even in this publication, as Gregory Fried shows in *Heidegger's Polemos: From Being to Politics*,[††] his new book on Heidegger's thought and politics, Heidegger suppressed admiring statements about the Nazis. There is no sign of active opposition at any time between 1933 and 1945, even though his support, as best we can now tell, was never as active again as it was early in the regime.

So, what is the connection between Heidegger's thought and his support of the Nazis? Clearly, the link is not altogether compulsory, because his analyses need not always result in supporting Nazism or its equivalent in all respects. It is not entirely accidental, however, because his thought and the Nazi regime share too much. What they have in common is not just the rhetoric of resolve, decision, and death. We find in both many other shared characteristics: the apotheosis of rootedness in a particular people; an intention to coordinate philosophy and science with other activities in this common root; real or rhetorical worry about modernity and technology's effect on simple traditions and tasks; and hostility to the leveling effects of liberal democracy.

These common features are not trivial or disposable but essential to Heidegger's thought. Heidegger's notion of the range, extent, and possible authentic destiny of a "people" always remained imprecise. Despite or, indeed, because of this, his thought amalgamates all possibilities in such a way that their limits and conflicts cannot come to the fore. The manner in which philosophy or poetry is necessarily cosmopolitan and can never be restricted to a here and now, the way in which political affairs always spring from the clashes of interest, opinion, and pride, and the link between the practical wish to be good and just and the theoretical search for the guiding answers to such questions are all obscured or miscast in Heidegger's understanding. Indeed, one might argue, though here is not the place, that these problems indicate misdirections in his thought generally. His work does not provide the basis for moderating our political expectations or for protecting our own independence within a political order. An assertive political illiberalism or a withdrawn political illiberalism, but always an illiberalism is a visible correlate of Heidegger's thought.

IF the link between Heidegger and the Nazis is not accidental, then we must ask whether Heidegger's thought is a

†† Yale University Press. 320 pp. $35.00.

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danger to be suppressed or a warning to be heeded. If we could say that his arguments lead necessarily to the beastliness of the Nazis, only someone of grotesque levity, absurd disinterest, or a murderous taste for brutal terror would want them to be proclaimed publicly. Even if his arguments were true and these their necessary consequences, anyone of decency and sense would wish them to be invisible and ineffective. As we have said, however, though the link is real, it is not inevitable. Moreover, one could hardly with intellectual honesty lay today's ethnic fascisms or near-fascisms at Heidegger's and his intellectual brethren's feet; even mild identity politics draws from others such as Derrida or Foucault more obviously than it draws from Heidegger. Nonetheless, nationalistic and ethnic dogmas that take the group to be irreducible or self-defining do receive some sustenance from his thought, because they lead away from the universally proper or true and toward the willful and the particular. For the moment, liberal democracy seems able to deal with these dangers while remaining true to itself, at least in some form.

The greater danger is the weakening of liberal democracy from within. This weakening is caused, in the end, by our forgetting why liberal democracy is good. We misunderstand freedom and its limits or lose the judgment or inclination to defend these limits. We forget or ignore the link between reason and natural rights. Heidegger's arguments contribute to this oblivion, as do the intellectual prejudices of so many of his followers. But the defense of liberalism, if it is to be successful, must stand confidently on its own ground. It cannot merely oppose what it believes to be harmful but is unable to show to be untrue.

Defenders of liberalism must not hide from liberalism's difficulties, which include many phenomena that Heidegger identified and can help us to understand. Among these are the proclivity of liberal democracy to flatten or level human purposes and possibilities; the tendency of technology to overwhelm all other understandings and experiences, so that central facts about the goods we seek, the characteristics we share, the beautiful things we can enjoy or produce, and the limits within which we must live are lost, forgotten, or transformed; and the tendency of democracy to stand in the way of serious reflection. Unless we face up to these dangers, others will deal with them in illiberal ways. A reasonable defense of liberal democracy from "fascisms" large and small must therefore at-

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tend to the denaturing of man to which fascism reacts in its distorted way. Not only Heidegger's political allegiances but especially his thought, and what it brings to our attention, are a salutary warning.

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The city of God in the city of man

DANIEL J. MAHONEY

FOR centuries, the Roman Catholic church was the most self-conscious and determined critic of "the modern project." It identified liberal democracy with the Enlightenment's efforts to free mankind from any natural or supernatural restraints on the human will. In 1864, Pope Pius IX notoriously concluded his *Syllabus of Errors* with a condemnation of those who called on the church to make peace with "liberalism, progress, and modern civilization" and thus to ignore what the church considered the demonic inspiration of the quest for the "autonomous" human self. In recent decades, everything has changed. Today, the *Syllabus* is nothing but a historical curiosity. A wide range of Catholic thinkers, including Pope John Paul II himself, have claimed to uncover the Christian origins of liberal democracy properly understood. A few years ago, the conservative Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, Jean-Marie Lustiger, even suggested that the French revolutionaries, the violent initiators of the first ideological, anti-Christian revolution of modern times, did not appreciate the underlying Christian inspiration of their efforts to found a social order on the principles of liberty, equality, and fraternity.

Christian leftists, so-called "liberation theologians," go even further. They criticize bourgeois democracy for insufficiently embodying modern humanitarian ideals and place their hopes in Marxist social analysis and the radical transformation of class relations. Today, hardly anyone sympathizes with or even remembers the long-standing Catholic critique of the modern humanitarian project. What are we to make of this remarkable reversal?

In his impressive new book, *Christian Faith and Modern Democracy: God and Politics in the Fallen World*,† political theorist Robert P. Kraynak challenges the new consensus on

† University of Notre Dame Press. 307 pp. $24.95.

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both the Left and Right affirming the compatibility of Christianity and modern democracy. This does not mean that he wants to go back. Kraynak is no reactionary and has little sympathy for those who romanticize the classical city or the supposed glories of medieval civilization. His politics are close to those of American religious neo-conservatives such as Richard John Neuhaus and Michael Novak, but he rejects their efforts to provide a theological justification for either democracy or capitalism. Instead, he calls for a recovery of a "politics of prudence" rooted in a classical Christian affirmation of the distinction between the Two Cities—the temporal city of man and the City of God. In the context of contemporary debates, Kraynak's return to this older understanding of religion and politics turns out to be novel and illuminating, although it raises some unresolved questions of its own.

IN Kraynak's view, liberal democracy is a legitimate political order but also one that poses grave threats to the integrity of the soul and the stability of the social order. On the one hand, its principles of freedom and equality are a powerful force for resisting tyranny and opposing injustices, but on the other hand, liberalism is largely silent about the sources of human obligation. In the long run, this silence acts as an acid eroding natural and legitimate authority in the church, family, and political community. For a while, liberalism's subversive logic was kept in check by "rational Christianity"—the hodgepodge of Enlightenment principles and Christian morality promoted by such thinkers as Locke and by some of the American Founders. But this was an unstable mix that was bound to unravel. Liberalism inexorably encourages a debilitating skepticism about the human good. It gives rise to a moral and cultural relativism that is ultimately destructive of both the pursuit of truth and of the rational recognition of the superiority of liberal democracy to various forms of tyranny. Today, many secular intellectuals are part of the problem. They are, in the revealing self-description of Richard Rorty, "freeloading atheists," living off an older "moral capital" while popularizing corrosive doctrines that undermine responsible individuality.

The modern liberal regime, marked by "individual rights, republican self-government, technological mastery and economic improvement," is based on a powerful moral claim about the dignity of the individual. But instead of grounding human dignity in a recognition that man is a fallen being who is nonetheless made in the "image and likeness of God," modern

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liberals locate human dignity in the modern aspiration to autonomy and self-mastery. But what then is to limit the self-assertion of the modern individual?

KRAYNAK is particularly effective in conveying the "hegemonic" character of the liberal democratic aspiration to autonomy. He demonstrates that the contemporary consensus about Christianity and modern democracy understates "the corrosive effects of a culture of rights and the leveling effects of mass democracy on the human soul and on the institutions that are necessary to sustain a sense of the sacred." In Kraynak's view, the modern principle of autonomy knows no restraint. Conversely, Kraynak argues that liberty under God needs to be rooted in an objective moral order that liberal democracy cannot acknowledge or validate. The danger is that a too-ready Christian acceptance of an understanding of human dignity rooted in personal autonomy will ultimately subvert the natural sense of gratitude on which all genuine religion rests. The religious believer knows that he is a debtor; the autonomous self, in contrast, experiences no gratitude for the *givenness* of the world.

Kraynak acknowledges that many religious defenders of democracy such as Pope John Paul II clearly subordinate human freedom to what the Pope calls the "truth about man." But the subordination of rights to an objective moral order goes against the grain of democratic modernity. An emphasis on human rights apart from other considerations leads to confusion about the nature of human freedoms and obligations. In the minds of many believers, Christian charity has become indistinguishable from secular humanitarianism. Even the defense of innocent life in terms of a comprehensive "right to life" encourages a mistaken belief in a "seamless garment of life," a pacifist position unable to accommodate "just war" or the distinction between innocent and guilty life. The contemporary Catholic church's tendency to defend the unborn and the weak in terms of "the language and logic of rights" has led many well-meaning Christians to mistakenly think that it is illogical to oppose abortion while supporting just war and capital punishment even though these positions are consistent with age-old church doctrine. The Cardinal Archbishop of Boston has even gone so far as to declare it a sin for Catholics to support capital punishment.

The logic of rights and the leveling effects of democracy also influence the internal life of the church. As Kraynak

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notes, the solemn liturgical worship of God is transformed into a kind of communal meal, accompanied by rather insipid contemporary music. Opposition to women's ordination, firmly rooted in Scripture and the church's "theology of the body," is thoughtlessly identified with sexism and the remnants of patriarchal authority. And in a desperate effort to remain relevant, the American Catholic church adopts gender-inclusive translations of Scripture that subvert its meaning and undermine the biblical account of man and woman, while doing nothing to appease its fevered critics who demand the full "democratization" of the Church.

KRAYNAK'S incisive analysis reveals an acute conundrum: The Christian religion can make sense of the dignity to which democracy aspires, but in its misguided efforts to accommodate democracy, the church risks losing its soul. As a result, the church also undermines its ability to moderate democracy. It seems that the church best serves the cause of democracy when it remains skeptical about democracy's fundamental moral claims. Yet Kraynak rightly refuses to despair of either democracy or the church. Self-government, the acknowledgement of separate spheres within society, and the rule of law are necessary protections against tyranny. They also serve as protections against theocratic temptations to which Christians have all too often succumbed in the past. In fact, Kraynak calls for a recovery of the Augustinian distinction between the Two Cities precisely because it provides a principled Christian foundation for avoiding both totalitarian worship of the state and the theocratic denial of a distinction between the spiritual and temporal realms of life. True constitutionalism, Kraynak argues, should not be confused with the *philosophy* of liberalism, with its inordinate emphasis on rights and its imperial conception of the autonomous self. In reposing the question as a matter of prudence, Kraynak provides a salutary correction to those who too readily believe that "all good things go together."

In the final chapters of his book, Kraynak discusses three practitioners of "constitutionalism without liberalism": Winston Churchill, who accommodated himself to democracy but without excessive flights of enthusiasm ("in this world of sin and woe ... democracy is the worst form of government except for all the other forms that have been tried from time to time"); Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who opposed communist totalitarianism in the name of moral principle and who in a series of

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largely ignored and misunderstood writings has defended self-government while criticizing the "anthropocentric humanism" at the core of Enlightenment thinking; and the American Lutheran theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, who argued that democracy cannot be defended by appealing to Enlightenment rationalism or faith in historical progress but only by a hard-headed appreciation of "original sin." In Kraynak's view, "the prudential politics that one finds in the Christian realism of Solzhenitsyn, Churchill, and Niebuhr" is a "better guard against totalitarian tyranny than the appeal to human rights because its brutal honesty about human nature prevents one from giving in to utopian fantasies" or "democratic tyranny."

Kraynak is certainly right to be wary of a full theoretical endorsement of liberalism. By expecting too much from liberal democracy, by overstating the prospects for a democratic public philosophy rooted in the moral law, many religious neo-conservatives momentarily succumbed to despair over its prospects. Their hopes for liberal democracy unrealized, they issued somewhat exaggerated warnings about "the end of democracy" in the pages of *First Things* a few years back. Yet, as Gertrude Himmelfarb has recently suggested, the United States can remain one nation even if for all practical purposes Americans now live in two distinct cultures. Culture wars are not simply a result of the cultural revolution of the 1960s but are intrinsic to the liberal democratic enterprise itself. The struggle between a traditional conception of "liberty under God" and the antinomian effort to "liberate" the human self is the enduring drama of which contemporary culture wars are but the most recent episode. A sober acceptance of this fact can moderate expectations from politics and encourage greater civility in private and public life.

Kraynak is both a friend and judicious critic of the religious neo-conservatives. They are his natural political allies and interlocutors. Yet sometimes Kraynak is less than generous to their position. For example, he lumps together Michael Novak, who assuredly has a realist understanding of human nature and the limits of politics, and Gustavo Gutiérrez, a founder of para-Marxist liberation theology, as two extremes to be equally avoided in the Christian analysis of economic questions.

ONE proponent of prudential politics is conspicuously absent from Kraynak's discussion—Alexis de Tocqueville. Kraynak draws freely from Tocqueville in his critique of mass society, and he notes that from Tocqueville we can learn how

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to ennoble democracy and avoid democratic tyranny. It was Tocqueville who first uncovered with emblematic clarity the logic of the democratic idea. The democratic principle of consent, "the dogma of the sovereignty of the people" as Tocqueville called it, legitimate in the political realm, is eventually applied to "most human actions." Those "aristocratic inheritances" that inform democratic consent (local self-government, family, the Church) are themselves gradually democratized in ways that undermine their ability to restrain the democratic impulse. Tocqueville thought democracy's spread was inevitable or "providential," which leads Kraynak to place him squarely in the camp of those who have accommodated themselves to human autonomy, and even to accuse him of having replaced divine-right monarchy with divine-right democracy. Kraynak ignores the sensible interpretation that Tocqueville's emphasis on democracy's inevitability is not an affirmation of historicism *per se*, nor an effort to divinize democracy, but rather a prudential recognition that liberty and human dignity must henceforth be defended within a new and sometimes perilous democratic dispensation.

This failure to understand Tocqueville is not merely a matter of interpretation: It has immense consequences for one's appreciation of what Kraynak calls the "spiritual significance of the modern democratic age." Kraynak is one with Tocqueville and other practitioners of the politics of prudence in believing that "democratic cultures ... overemphasize autonomy and mastery in their conceptions of human dignity." But Kraynak believes that the democratic age may be no more than a passing blip in human history, and he hopes that mankind will move forward to a new "postmodern" age in which liberty and moral obligation are reconciled. But if Tocqueville is right, then democracy is our "fatal circle," the social and political circumstance within which our present moral and political choices unfold. The task for those who reject the self-assertion of radical modernity, who refuse to genuflect before the claims of the autonomous self, is to present their case in a way that is compelling to modern man without succumbing to the democratic faith in human autonomy. Christians and other supporters of a traditional moral order have no choice but to contest for the soul of democracy while appreciating that the battle can never be completely won and often seems as if it is being lost.

Kraynak demonstrates the dangers of various Christian ef-

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forts to come to terms with liberal democracy without ever suggesting a plausible alternative. His own articulation of "constitutionalism without liberalism" is best understood as a thoughtful and measured effort to accommodate Christianity to democracy and democracy to Christianity without doing too much damage to either. Misgivings aside, this learned and provocative book is an excellent introduction to the problem of Christianity and democracy in our time, and to the enduring tension between religious faith and "the logic of rights" in modern liberal societies.

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Debating evolution

ALVIN KERNAN

SCIENCE'S world view is usually said to be cold and abstract, but in fact it offers a far more exciting, if more threatening, image than the Biblical account of the creation of the world. In his latest book, *The Evolutionists: The Struggle for Darwin's Soul*,† Richard Morris, a scientist of wide-ranging knowledge, presents what has become the standard scientific view of the origins and development of the world and its life. A reader could ask for no better introduction to the increasingly important, and increasingly complex, evolution debates.

As science explains it, the Earth was created over four billion years ago when stellar dust and rocky fragments collided to create a molten sphere. Volcanoes exploded through its skin and tectonic plates shifted, pushing up great mountains and creating deep canyons. The atmosphere was alternately boiling hot and icy cold, with huge glaciers replacing empty deserts. Great winds and vast oceans ate at the land's shores. Whirling about a distant sun, bombarded by sterile meteors from space, the Earth was light-years away from its nearest stellar neighbors.

Living things, as Morris explains, appeared about 3.5 billion years ago, and since that time have been no more fixed than the Earth itself. Old species died out, sometimes killed off by natural catastrophes like the great meteor that slammed into the Yucatan 65 million years ago and wiped out the dinosaurs. Hominids are estimated to have appeared about 1.5 million years ago, and our species, *homo sapiens*, only about a hundred thousand years ago.

We long for stability, but science has given us a world of endless variety, one in ceaseless movement but without direction. Charles Darwin's principle of natural selection, as outlined in his *Origin of Species*, published in 1859, provided the

† W.H. Freeman & Co. 262 pp. $22.95.

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only vector that we have had in this vivid infinity of violent change. Natural selection is still at the heart of the orthodox view of evolution, describing how the environment determines which of Nature's variations will succeed and procreate, and which will fail to survive because of a misfit with the circumstances in which they appear. For example, a shift in rainfall patterns may turn a jungle into desert and thereby threaten an entire species unless some variant, such as a finch with a longer beak, can adapt to the new circumstances.

During Darwin's lifetime, Gregor Mendel, an obscure Augustinian monk hybridizing peas in the garden of his Bohemian monastery, made visible the workings of genetics. Genetics would in time show that species ran true to type rather than combining traits, and that they threw off variants that would be tested by natural selection. Although Mendel published his findings, Darwin never read them. It was not until this century that genes were actually located and seen, and the science of genetics began to take shape. In recent years, genes have come to be accepted as the source of new life forms, continually tested and refined by natural selection. Thus the "origin of species" is a twofold process, explained as much by mutating genetic codes as by the natural selection that Darwin described. Certainly, after the genetic revolution, and especially now with the human genome mapped, the origin of species is no less than an interaction of the two, one "proposing" and the other "disposing."

DARWINIAN natural selection is still orthodoxy, but the world of ideas is no more immune to change than the globe itself or the animals and plants that inhabit it. Morris describes in close detail a scientific war between orthodox evolutionists who understand natural selection to be the determining force behind species survival, and other leading scientists who, while still conceding priority to natural selection, offer other ways of accounting for the ceaseless change in forms of life and their activities.

Richard Dawkins, author of *The Selfish Gene*, and philosopher Daniel Dennett are among the leaders of "the evolutionary fundamentalists," who, following the traditional *modus operandi* of science, proclaim a single truth—natural selection—to explain all natural phenomena. They are sometimes styled "Panglossians" by their opponents, after the pedant in Voltaire's *Candide* who teaches that despite its untold misery, ours is the best of all possible worlds. Their attempts to prove natural

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selection by inventing survival functions for every trait they encounter have been mockingly labeled "just-so stories."

Their opponents, "the revolutionaries" or the "evolutionary pluralists," are led by Harvard molecular biologist Steven Jay Gould, his colleague Richard Lewontin, and Niles Eldredge, a paleontologist at the Museum of Natural History. Morris characterizes Gould and his supporters as evolutionary "holist[s] who believe that reductionism is not sufficient, that interesting new phenomena emerge at higher levels of complexity."

IN part because he writes so well, Gould has become the received authority on evolutionary matters, at least in the United States. He still believes, or claims to believe, that a blind natural selection is the primary force in evolution. But Gould also wants other forces, such as "spandrels," to be recognized. These are traits and abilities like reading which have themselves no immediate survival value, but are by-products of developments that do have survival value, like a relatively large human brain. In other words, natural selection continues to operate, but other forces play a part in the creation of new traits and new species. Where strict Darwinians see a steady appearance of new species, Gould looks at the fossil record—incomplete as it is—and sees long periods of stability followed by brief, intense times of change, a pattern that he calls "punctuated equilibrium." Punctuated equilibrium allows Gould to speculate that some unknown force lies behind the change of species, one that makes itself known in sudden concentrated changes. Whatever the particular approach, Gould always seeks out the broader view, the variety in the system, and what he therefore offers is a more open, and less determined pattern of evolution than that of the strict Darwinians.

Gould has had numerous allies in this effort, for the questions concerning evolution involve all aspects of modern science and a lot of politics as well. Morris describes a number of these fascinating developments. Take, for example, "complexity science," in which scientists abandon the standard reductive scientific principle, that is, one model or simple unit, such as the quark or Chomsky's universal hard-wired grammar, upon which all else is based. Complexity scientists instead look at an entire field of phenomena and assume that all parts interact with one another to create new and unexpected results, results that they believe no single force could have created alone. Perhaps the most striking example of complexity science that Morris offers is the ant colony. Each individual

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ant is extremely limited in what it can do, but the ant colony as a whole performs a multiplicity of functions ranging from milking aphids to capturing slaves from neighboring colonies. These activities are the product of the needs of a complex group, not the interests of a single individual.

Complexity science, though new, already offers a very different explanatory framework than does the strict pattern of genetic mutation and natural selection. In the latter system, new species appear at a fairly steady rate and are then tested by the environment, which either permits them to flourish or discards them. From the view of complexity science, things accumulate, interact, and, at least in some cases, produce systems with new and unexpected features. Language offers an excellent example of this process. Take the few vowels the human voice is capable of, or the 50 some sounds of the phonetic alphabet, and out of them grows the wondrous world of language. Language can, of course, be explained by a "just-so story" of how it furthers survival, but it would be a limited and strained argument at best.

OURS is a time when all things are said to be political. Evolution, Morris points out, is no exception. Gould has been charged with being either a Marxist or a crypto-religionist for seeking to alleviate Darwin's raw and meaningless struggle for survival with humane intervention. Gould denies any political or religious bias to his science, but it does obviously appeal to the liberal view of life far more than other evolutionary theories. In contrast, strict natural selection better fits a conservative perspective, one that seeks absolute rules and accepts that life is hard, always at risk, and at times beyond human control. The conservatism of natural selection is most apparent in the sociobiology of Gould's antagonist, E. O. Wilson, who traces all human activity back to primary traits that are locked into our genes by the iron law of necessity: Only that which works survives.

Gould and his allies want some wiggle room, some possibility of getting out of the bind of natural selection. Their biology synchronizes best with the standard social science model in which humans 'escape' nature into a more hospitable man-made culture. Morris offers as an example of this kind of social science Margaret Mead's studies of cultures in Samoa and New Guinea. According to Mead, these societies reversed the most familiar human sexual practices. Her noble savages practiced free sex from an early age, didn't feel sexual jeal-

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ousy, and allowed women the same sexual freedom that, at least in most societies, men alone possess. Modern feminists and gay-rights advocates share Mead's belief that sex is only a matter of culture and is therefore open to limitless variation and purposeful change. Most conservatives still argue, however, that nature trumps culture and that the monogamous female and the polygamous male are "hard-wired" roles, reinforced by tradition and by reproductive success.

ONLY facts can settle questions about how life has come to take its present forms. But new facts are hard to come by in evolution, given the relative slowness with which species change and adaptations appear. One has to admire Stuart Kauffman, a theoretical biologist discussed by Morris, who in the absence of natural facts has set up and run a computerized model of evolution. Although his "Ancestor" has only a few "genes," and his genes only a few "traits" instead of the three billion "letters" of the human genome, Kauffman sends them merrily on their digital way, covering billions of years in foreshortened computer time, going down many alleys, blind and otherwise. It is on this computer that he runs his digital evolutions, although so far his results have been "inconclusive." He certainly has not been able to tell us why deafness, surely a feature with negative survival value, has not yet eliminated the white-furred cats with which it is linked.

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